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POSTWAR INDOCHINA
Old Enemies and New Allies

Edited by Joseph J. Zasloff

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CENTER FOR
THE STUDY OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS

POSTWAR INDOCHINA
Old Enemies and New Allies

Edited by Joseph J. Zasloff

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Diane B. Bendahmane, General Editor

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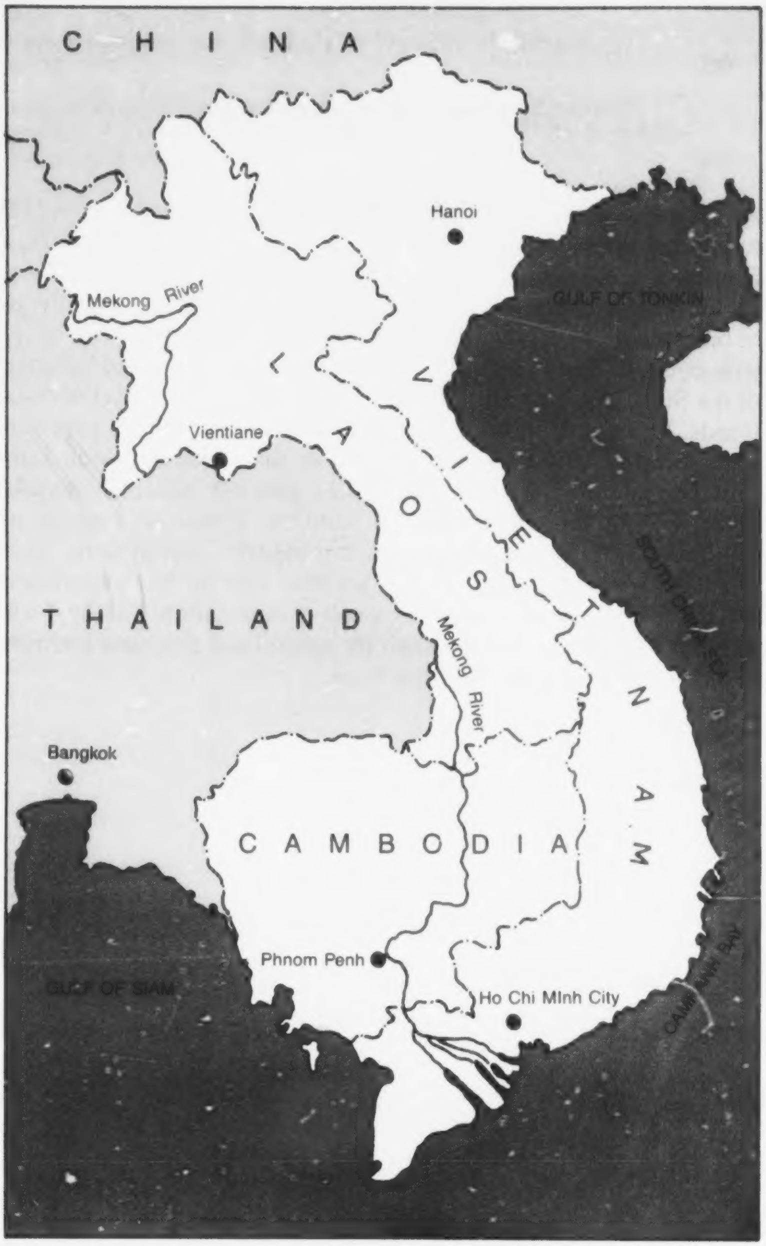
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INDOCHINA

Foreword

Don Oberdorfer

Don Oberdorfer is a diplomatic correspondent for the Washington Post. *From 1965 to 1968 he covered the Vietnam War for the Knight newspaper chain. He is the author of* "Tet!" *(New York: Doubleday, 1971).*

When I began covering Vietnam and its interaction with the United States and its neighbors in July of 1965—nearly twenty-two years ago—I felt, with considerable justification, that I was coming to this story very late. After the war against the French and eleven years of U.S. involvement I recall saying at the time that I felt a bit like a moviegoer walking into the theater in the third reel of a double feature.

Little did I know on that summer afternoon in Washington that I would spend a considerable part of the next ten years covering the rapid rise, stalemate, and decline of U.S. military forces in Indochina, culminating in the collapse of the non-communist regime in South Vietnam in 1975. Nor could I have guessed that more than a decade after that, Indochina would still echo to the sound of gunfire and still be a cockpit of international conflict in which the great powers as well as regional powers and guerrilla forces quarrel over the controls.

I recall my first day particularly well, July 28, 1965. In a press conference that afternoon President Lyndon B. Johnson announced the results of weeks of intense policymaking, saying that he was raising authorized U.S. troop strength in Vietnam from 75,000 to 125,000 men with more to be sent "as requested." (Actually he had already agreed to raise the troop level to at least 225,000, and it was headed up to 500,000.) What Johnson announced that day was perhaps the most important decision of his presidency; he had placed the United States squarely into a land war in Asia.

Acting on a friendly tip from the office of Bill Moyers, Johnson's press secretary, I appeared at the White House late that afternoon, several hours after the press conference, for a news briefing. Those were the days of informal and intimate press relations, in which typically twenty to thirty reporters stood around the desk of the press secretary in the West Wing near the Oval Office to receive announcements and ask questions. There were no seats, cameras, lecterns, or legions of reporters.

When everyone was in the room and the door had closed, Moyers announced that Johnson wanted to see us, and led the entire group through a side door across the walkway past the rose garden and up the steps to the living room of the family quarters of the White House. Johnson appeared, very serious, loquacious, and intense. He wanted us to know he understood the gravity of sending American boys to battle—no more pretense that this was a police action around air bases—and that he had issued orders that no American fighting man was to be denied any bullet, any bomb, or any weapon that he needed to do the job. He kept repeating his instructions about supply, evidently mindful of criticism from Congress in earlier conflicts that troops had been sent to fight without adequate weapons of war.

The lack of adequate bullets and bombs did not prove to be the trouble in Vietnam. I had no inkling then that the opposite would be more of a problem—that the absence of "fire discipline" in a crowded country would work against the U.S. effort.

Stagnation in Indochina Amid Rapid Changes in the Region

From my perspective, events have moved very slowly in Indochina in recent years—much too slowly for impatient Americans. As of December 1986, Vietnam had been at war in Cambodia eight years, which is a long time. Since the earliest months, there have been few important battles or clear-cut trends.

The most notable thing to me, in fact, is that the struggle inside Cambodia and the situation in Indochina have remained almost unchanged while nearly everything else in the region has changed rapidly and seems likely to change even more, and possibly even more rapidly, in the months ahead. Such events as the Sixth Congress of Vietnam's Communist Party in December 1986 and the Soviet foreign minister's meetings in Hanoi in March 1987 to test the waters after a trip through Southeast Asia suggest stirrings within Indochina's time capsule.

Change has been dramatic in China, which once (we were told) was as close to Vietnam as lips and teeth and is now its most important antagonist. The reversal of direction from Chairman Mao Zedong's final "cultural revolution" to Deputy Premier Deng Xiaoping's rapid modernization is changing Chinese life and bringing China "into the world" on its own terms to a greater degree than any time since the 1949 revolution and for many centuries before that. We can speculate about whether this trend has recently slowed or even stopped, but that is another story. Today China's "independent foreign policy" is shifting its external relationships almost everywhere, except, so far, in its unyielding conflict with Vietnam.

Under the leadership of General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet Union seems also on the leading edge of important changes which, as in the case of China, promise to radiate outward from shifts in domestic policy. Gorbachev's speech in Vladivostok in July 1986 made clear his desire for a rapprochement with China and a more active Soviet political role throughout Asia and the Pacific. Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze's trip is only the latest sign that Gorbachev was not just making a showy speech. At the same time, the Soviet Union continues to enhance its first military outpost in Southeast Asia, the base at Camranh Bay, and to increase its military links to North Korea.

Non-communist Asia has undergone more dramatic and dynamic changes than the communist giants, China and the Soviet Union. We are now just embarked on what has been called the "Pacific Century" because of the unprecedented economic growth over a wide geographic area, taking in a huge number of people in a diversity of cultures. The market economies of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and, to a lesser yet notable degree, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and others have set the pace for growth in recent years, even if they have experienced obvious bumps, slowdowns, and challenges. Of the market economies, only the Philippines has lagged behind in the past decade, a fact which helped bring about the ouster of President Ferdinand Marcos and the installation of Corazón Aquino a year ago.

To fly from Bangkok to Hanoi is to leap back in time to an earlier era. The non-market economies—North Korea, Burma, and Vietnam—have been left behind. This carries an important message for those countries and their systems.

While most of East Asia has been transformed by rapid economic growth, Vietnam has been so deeply engaged in military activity that it has not been able to focus on its domestic economy and other aspects of domestic growth. While others were making computers or computer chips, Vietnam was making Ho Chi Minh sandals from rubber tires. While others were entering the global arena of international trade, banking, and communications, Vietnam was fighting yet another war, in Cambodia.

It is startling to recall now the extent of international goodwill toward Vietnam in 1975 at the end of the Second Indochina War. The United States sulked and licked its wounds, but many other nations were ready to aid Vietnam enter a long overdue period of peace at last. That willingness evaporated overnight when Vietnam invaded Cambodia, even though the world had been shocked by the horrors of the Khmer Rouge in power. Because of the war and the stance taken about the war by the United States and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Vietnam remains today largely a pariah state.

Prospects for a Way Out of Stagnation and Isolation

The Sixth Congress of Vietnam's Communist Party is clearly a landmark. The old leadership which had surrounded Ho Chi Minh in the 1930s gave way at last to other figures. It cannot be said to mark a full-scale generational change, at least at the top, but appears to be the start of one. Top leadership figures in their mid- and late seventies and eighty-year-old Premier Pham Van Dong gave way to top leaders in their early seventies and late sixties, most of whom have spent much of their lives in the South or who were born there.

On the other hand, there is still no real sign of a shift in attitudes toward the war, which in many respects is the key problem. I find it difficult to believe that the inventive, intelligent people of Indochina will continue for many more decades as the only ones in Southeast Asia, except for the hapless Burmese, to stagnate, while others grow and change, especially as they see more of the world around them. However, I have been saying this for seven years!

U.S. Involvement in Indochina: The Pain of the Experience

The U.S. decade of deep involvement in Indochina, from July 1965 to May 1975, was a searing experience for Americans, and its effects are with us yet. It was a national learning experience of the most agonizing sort in which all of us—government, military, press, and public—learned together the hard way. More than a decade after the fall of Saigon the so-called Vietnam syndrome of reluctance to intervene abroad militarily is with us yet in public attitudes, despite efforts of the Reagan Administration and others to extirpate it. It has been moderated since the 1970s though, and today remains as a sensible sense of caution. The new public opinion study by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations reports broad public support for U.S. military intervention if required to defend Western Europe or Japan—truly vital interests of the United States—but opposition to military intervention in cases of less clear-cut gravity. (I do not agree with the public response in every case. For example, I believe military intervention would be proper and in fact inevitable if North Korea invaded South Korea, but the Vietnam experience taught our nation, quite properly, that military intervention is a very serious matter that must be considered with extreme care.)

Despite the disillusion arising from the war, the United States to its credit has remained a strong power militarily in the Pacific and, perhaps even more important, a source of trade, economic growth, and political backing to friendly nations. The U.S. strategy of following ASEAN's lead on Indochina has been a success, but it may one day be overtaken by events. The strategy has been relatively easy to carry out while ASEAN has been united and Vietnam intransigent about Cambodia. If and when either of those conditions changes, Washington will be required to reconsider its policies.

Despite the pain of the experience, Vietnam continues to hold tremendous fascination for the American public. Vietnam books sell, publishers say, and they keep coming out. It is estimated that 1,500 books about Indochina have been published since 1975, about two-thirds of them—or 1,000—in the United States. The Vietnam public television series and a succession of Vietnam-oriented motion pictures, good and bad, vie for public attention. Nearly all of these books and films look backward.

Unfortunately, there is much less interest in the current and future situation in Indochina. Links with the area are thin and information even thinner. That is why the reports in this volume about the region today and tomorrow are especially important. Those who cannot remember the past, as the adage says, may be doomed to repeat it. Those who remember only the past and who refuse to face the present and the future are even worse off. Neither we Americans nor the peoples of the region can afford that escapist view.

Introduction

Joseph J. Zasloff

Joseph J. Zasloff, the editor of this volume and organizer of the symposium on which it is based, was a Scholar in Residence at the Center for the Study of Foreign Affairs in 1987.

Dramatic changes have taken place in relations among Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos since the communist seizures of power in 1975. Vietnam smoothly confirmed its role as master over its apprentice revolutionaries in Laos, the Pathet Lao, but Vietnam's erstwhile revolutionary partners in Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge, turned hostile. Sharing the traditional Cambodian fear of being swallowed by their bigger neighbor, the Khmer Rouge expressed their hostility with a series of anti-Vietnamese measures, including provocative attacks against Vietnamese territory. Vietnam was aroused by these threats to its security and believed that the Khmer Rouge were being manipulated by China. And in December 1979 Vietnam invaded Cambodia, overthrowing Pol Pot and establishing a puppet regime in Phnom Penh. In retaliation for this invasion of a client, China initiated a military incursion into Vietnam in February 1979, aimed at "teaching Vietnam a lesson."

By this time, events in Indochina were no longer of central concern to the United States—even dramatic ones such as these. Although American policymakers had defined Indochina as a region of vital national interest from the mid-1950s to the early 1970s, after signing the Paris Agreement and completing the withdrawal of U.S. troops in January 1973, U. S. official as well as public interest in the region plummeted. For almost a decade after the U.S. withdrawal it seemed that a collective amnesia had set in, designed to block out the pain of the American intervention.

This book is manifestation of a renewed American interest in Indochina—one of many such manifestations mentioned by Don Oberdorfer in his foreword. The reports in this book examine the relationships that have emerged among the Indochinese states twelve years after the communists' accession to power and analyze the interaction of the new Indochina with important external powers—the Soviet Union, China, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the United States. The book is based on a conference held on March 10 and 11, 1987, at the Center for the Study of Foreign Affairs of the Foreign Service Institute. This conference had its origins in my discussions with Dr. Hans Binnendijk, director of the Center, and Mr. Joseph V. Montville, the Center's director of research, when I was a scholar-in-residence at the Center. Leading analysts of Indochinese affairs in academia, journalism, and government were invited to prepare studies on the critical issues of an emerging Indochina. The conference was attended by some 225 participants, largely professionals with an active interest in Indochina from government, the universities, and international and voluntary agencies, who posed questions and engaged in discussion following the formal presentations. All papers were subsequently revised and updated for publication in this volume.

The principal findings of the conference, developed in the chapters of this book, are summarized below.

Vietnam and the "Special Relationships"

Vietnam appears deeply committed to maintaining its dominance in Indochina. With security as its primary concern, Hanoi is determined to prevent Laos and Cambodia from being used as springboards for hostile activity against Vietnam and thus believes it is critical that Vietnam exercise political control over the neighboring Indochinese countries, similar to the Soviet Union's control of Eastern Europe.

The Vietnamese leaders appear to be pleased with the "special relationship" they have developed with Laos. The Vietnamese Communists have had an intimate, forty-year relationship with the Lao Communist movement, having helped to recruit its leadership, shape its ideology, build its military forces and guide its government. The Lao People's Democratic Republic, which seized full power in December 1975, with Vietnamese endorsement, is regarded as reliable by Hanoi. Moreover, since the Lao People's Democratic Republic has been accepted as the legitimate government by the major powers—including China, the United States, and ASEAN—Vietnam's hegemony over Laos has met with little challenge. The Vietnamese may have the "Lao model" in mind as they attempt to shape their relationship with Cambodia.

Cambodia has presented severe challenges to Hanoi since the Khmer Rouge victory in 1975. The communist movement in Cambodia not only turned resistant to Hanoi's influence, but under the leadership of Pol Pot it also launched attacks on Vietnamese border provinces and purged Khmer cohorts who had been associated with Vietnam. Even more ominous to the Vietnamese was their perception that the Khmer Rouge were increasingly subject to provocative manipulation by China. Concluding that their security was severely threatened, the Vietnamese launched an attack in December 1978, overthrowing the Pol Pot regime and installing their own Khmer political creation, the People's Republic of Kampuchea. Vietnamese fears of Chinese reprisal proved realistic when China launched a punitive attack against Vietnam in February 1979.

Although the immediate threat to its security was resolved by replacement of the hostile Khmer Rouge regime and the continued presence of 140,000 Vietnamese troops in Cambodia (as of 1987) to protect the Vietnamese position, a longer-term problem remains for Vietnam. The resistance forces of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea, supported by Thailand and its ASEAN partners, as well as by China and the United States, continue to harass the People's Republic of Kampuchea and its Vietnamese mentors. Moreover, these powers have mounted a campaign of economic isolation and political sanctions aimed at forcing Vietnam to withdraw from its occupation of Cambodia. As the Vietnamese see it, this action against their presence in Cambodia is a thinly disguised threat to the vital interests of Vietnam. They see themselves fighting rear-guard attacks in Cambodia that are designed to isolate and weaken them. As Larry A. Niksch spells out, a number of options are available to Vietnam to alter its Cambodian policy in ways which might reduce tensions with China and the ASEAN countries. But until now, Vietnam has not regarded these alternatives as providing sufficient protection to its security. Nayan Chanda concludes: "If Vietnam was ready to pay any price to gain its independence, it is ready to bear any burden to protect it. Security, in the Vietnamese view, has no price tag."

An important article published in 1984 under the signature of General Le Duc Anh, the Vietnamese military commander in Cambodia, who was elevated to be minister of defense following the Sixth Congress of the Vietnamese Communist Party in 1987, reveals the fundamental commitment of Vietnam to its hold on Cambodia. He wrote that because China and other enemies were constantly trying to divide the Indochinese countries in order to subjugate them, a strategic and combat alliance among the three nations had become the "law of survival and development." At the Sixth Party Congress, safeguarding and strengthening the "militant alliance and solidarity among the three Indochina nations" was elevated to a "law of development."

While the Sixth Party Congress brought significant changes in party and government leadership, as Stephen T. Johnson reports, there was no hint that Vietnam might be prepared to alter its posture in Cambodia. Hanoi is proceeding toward the consolidation of its "special relationship" with Cambodia, helping to build a party, a government, and an army which will be able to manage internal affairs with a minimum of Vietnamese assistance. Thus, Hanoi would be reluctant to place in jeopardy the regime in Phnom Penh that it has so painfully constructed. However, Hanoi has not altered its public commitment to withdraw its troops from Cambodia by 1990. As for the likelihood that Hanoi will keep this commitment, Nayan Chanda enters a qualified, "yes, perhaps." Alluding to the meeting in Paris in December 1987 between Prince Sihanouk and Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, Chanda leaves open the possibility that Vietnam might be willing to accept a non-socialist, neutralist government in Cambodia, with its security interest being served through discreet influence rather than overt political control and military domination.

Soviet and Chinese Perspectives

The Soviet Union, as Vietnam's principal ally and supplier of an estimated $1.5 billion in military assistance in 1986, is a critical source of support for Vietnam. Even though Secretary General Mikhail Gorbachev has indicated a desire to see a resolution of the Cambodian problem and urged more conciliatory relations between Vietnam and China in his 1986 Vladivostok speech, the Soviet Union does not appear inclined to apply pressure in Hanoi. Donald Zagoria notes that, with so few friends in the region, "Moscow is likely to pay almost any price the Vietnamese insist upon in order to continue maintaining Soviet military facilities in Vietnam."

China harbored multiple grievances against Vietnam after 1975, including Hanoi's close ties with Moscow, its "arrogant" territorial claims against China, its mistreatment of ethnic Chinese residents of Vietnam, and, as the last straw, its invasion of Cambodia, a Chinese client state. Peking responded to this invasion by a military incursion into Vietnam in February 1979, aiming to "teach Vietnam a lesson." China has persisted in its hostility to Vietnam by arming the Khmer Rouge resistance within Cambodia and rattling its sabers on the Vietnamese–Chinese frontier. These actions are part of a long-term strategy, as William J. Duiker puts it, which assumes that China's superior resources, combined with Vietnam's internal weaknesses and the instability of its position in Cambodia, will force Hanoi to change its policy. Some analysts believe that Hanoi will have to come to terms with China, in the long run. Others are convinced that Vietnam will persist in its domination of Cambodia, even at high cost, and will create a *fait accompli* in Indochina, which will ultimately be accepted in the region. Whatever the outcome, it appears likely that China—at a low cost to itself—will continue to apply military pressure upon Hanoi in the near future and will press for continued isolation of Vietnam by the international community.

Thus, neither the Soviet Union nor China is in a hurry to search for a negotiated solution to the Cambodian dispute. Both see their interests better served by a persistence of the *status quo* than by any alternative situation they would have the means to create.

Thailand and the ASEAN Perspective

One positive outcome of the emergence of victorious revolutionary Vietnam in Southeast Asia has been the crystallization of ASEAN. The challenge posed by a communist Indochina has inspired cohesion in this fledgling organization. When Hanoi invaded Cambodia, Thailand was disturbed by the arrival at its border of an ancient adversary, now committed to a Marxist–Leninist ideology. The ASEAN nations joined with Thailand to condemn the Vietnamese occupation and to call for the withdrawal of Vietnamese military forces, neutralization, and political self-determination for Cambodia. They have supported Thai initiatives to apply military and diplomatic pressure on Vietnam. Throughout the eight years of Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia, ASEAN has remained united and steadfast in their policy, even though Indonesia and Malaysia show limited enthusiasm for this posture which expands Chinese influence in the region. James R. Rush nonetheless offers a clear-cut prediction that ASEAN is not likely to fragment over Cambodia. The foreign minister of Indonesia, who has been the chief interlocutor for ASEAN with Hanoi, assured Rush in an interview that Indonesia is steadfast in support of ASEAN policy and that "time is on our side."

While China is more aggressive than ASEAN in its anti-Vietnamese posture, the ASEAN nations, especially Thailand, also see their interests served by continuing to resist Hanoi's attempt to consolidate its hold on Cambodia. Thus, ASEAN's posture contributes to the probable persistence of the Cambodian conflict in the near future.

U.S. Policy Toward Indochina

Since 1979, U.S. policy has been to provide low-profile, low-cost support to the ASEAN posture. Only in regard to the Americans missing-in-action does the United States pursue independent, active contacts with Hanoi. During the early years of the Carter Administration, U.S. policymakers earnestly sought normalization of diplomatic relations with Vietnam, aiming to "put the Vietnam War behind us." But Hanoi coolly countered with demands for the $4.2 billion that President Richard M. Nixon had secretly promised "to heal the wounds of war" in accordance with Article 21 of the Paris Peace Agreement. Recognizing that there was not the slightest possibility that Congress would appropriate funds which a majority of the members saw as "reparations," the Carter Administration rejected Hanoi's demands. By mid-1978, as Vietnam sensed danger from China and was reaching out for diplomatic support from the United States and the West, Hanoi dropped its claim for these funds. However, the Carter Administration by then had adopted a more pronounced tilt toward Peking—playing the so-called "China card" espoused by National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brezezinski—and nothing positive resulted from the conciliatory attitude of the Vietnamese. In December 1978, the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia, after strengthening their ties with the Soviet Union through a twenty-five-year friendship treaty and joining COMECON or C.M.E.A. (the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance). Consequently, U.S. policymakers showed little further interest in normalization, despite Hanoi's continued eagerness.

Important unsolved problems remain for the United States and Indochina. Vietnam is heavily dependent upon the Soviet Union, and there is a significant Soviet military presence in the region. China is substantially involved in the Cambodian dispute, which raises anxiety among some ASEAN members. The Sino–Soviet rivalry increases the danger of Big Power meddling and polarization in the region. Tensions at the Thai–Cambodian border present a special danger to Thailand. Some Thais see this unresolved conflict adjacent to their country as a threat to emerging democracy in Thailand, since it tends to reinforce the dominant political role of the Thai military. What's more, the conflict continues to produce refugees from Indochina. These problems notwithstanding, U.S. policymakers have not envisaged alternative policies which would better serve U.S. interests. Evelyn Colbert concludes that, while the option of normalizing relations with Hanoi is open to the United States, such an action probably would not alter Hanoi's course in Cambodia or reduce Vietnam's dependence upon the Soviet Union, since China's hostility would probably continue. Apart from the missing-in-action question, the U.S. Congress, like the executive branch, has evinced little interest in Vietnam, as Frederick Z. Brown points out. Certainly Congress has not pressed for a more accommodative policy toward Vietnam. Therefore, it does not appear that the United States is likely in the near future to change its low-cost, low-profile support of the ASEAN policy, which also harmonizes with China's policy.

Summary and Conclusions

The following themes emerge from the chapters in this volume:

- *Twelve years after the communist seizure of power, Vietnam has emerged as the indisputable hegemonic power in Indochina.* Vietnam regards the presence of pliant, politically reliable regimes in Phnom Penh and Vientiane as vital to its own security.

- *While Vietnam will attempt to maintain a controlling influence over its Indochina neighbors, it is not likely to pursue this goal through the establishment of an Indochinese Federation.* If Vietnam were to attempt to impose a federation, as MacAlister Brown points out, it would probably generate serious resistance and raise the cost of coordinating the defense and consolidation of the three socialist revolutions. Rather, Vietnam will continue to employ political leadership devices rather than centralized authority or administration to exert its influence.

- *Although outside powers have raised few objections to Vietnam's dominating role in Laos, the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia has met with stiff resistance.* Thailand sees Vietnam's presence in Cambodia as a serious threat to its own security, and Thailand's ASEAN partners have supported the front-line state in demanding Vietnamese withdrawal. The ASEAN nations sponsored the formation of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea and support its guerrilla activities against the Vietnamese-sponsored People's Republic of Kampuchea. ASEAN's pressure on Vietnam to withdraw from Cambodia is likely to continue in the near future.

- *China has been a critical force in disputing Vietnam's domination of Cambodia.* Angered by Vietnam's alliance with the Soviet Union, insulted by the Vietnamese mistreatment of ethnic Chinese in Vietnam, and provoked by Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia in December 1978, the Chinese launched a punitive strike against Vietnam in February 1979. As long as Vietnam continues its occupation of Cambodia and retains close ties to the Soviet Union, China is unlikely to alter its hostility toward Hanoi.

- *The Soviet Union is Vietnam's principal ally and major supplier of military and economic assistance.* In return, the Soviets enjoy access to Camranh Bay and the use of military facilities for intelligence-gathering. Even though General Secretary Gorbachev has proclaimed the desirability of a negotiated settlement in the Cambodian dispute and has called for a reduction in Sino–Vietnamese tensions, the Soviet Union seems unlikely to alienate Hanoi's leaders by pressuring Vietnam to withdraw from Cambodia.

- *The United States has adopted a low-profile, low-cost policy toward Indochina, following the lead of ASEAN, and in consonance with China, in opposing Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia.* While problems in the region persist, from the U.S. perspective, U.S. policymakers at present see no available options which would better serve U.S. interests.

Part One

VIETNAM & INDOCHINA

1.

Vietnam's Politics and Economy In Mid-1987

Stephen T. Johnson

Stephen T. Johnson was Vietnam Desk Officer at the Department of State from 1984 to 1986, and from 1967 to 1973 he worked in the Foreign Service on Vietnamese communist affairs in Saigon and Washington, D.C.

Vietnam, with a population of 62 million and a well-equipped veteran army numbering over a million men, is a military giant in continental southeast Asia. It dominates its two Indochinese neighbors, Laos and Cambodia, although it has yet to consolidate its position in Cambodia. Even China has discovered that, short of getting involved in a major war, its ability to coerce Vietnam is limited. In contrast to its military importance, however, Vietnam is an economic pygmy. While most of the other countries of East Asia, including China, have been making rapid advances in their economies and bettering the lives of their people during the last decade, Vietnam has stood still or perhaps has even fallen back.

Vietnam's leaders, who were nurtured in the Vietnamese Communist Party's long struggle for power over the whole of the country, seem to be perplexed by their nation's economic problems, which have resisted and sometimes even been exacerbated by their efforts to solve them. How to change this situation was the principal focus of public discussion during the period leading to the Sixth Party Congress in December 1986. Official statements during and since the congress, however, do not lead one to conclude that fundamental departures from present domestic policies are envisioned.

The nature and strength of Vietnam's leadership and the state of its economy will be important factors in how Vietnam faces the domestic and foreign challenges of the last few years of this century.

The Need for a Change

The stability of its leadership has been a source of strength to the Vietnamese Communist Party in the fifty-seven years since its establishment in 1930. During that period, the party fought two major wars and achieved control of all of Vietnam, but there were no significant purges among its senior leadership. Although a factor in Vietnamese politics, factionalism was kept within strict limits. The party was led by Ho Chi Minh until he died in 1969 and then by Le Duan until he died in 1986. In 1986 the other ranking members of the Politburo had been among the party's principal leaders since the 1930s. Increasingly, however, this strength had become a weakness as senior members of the Politburo advanced in age into their late seventies and even to their eighties. They and other veterans were blamed by younger party cadres for the country's economic woes and were considered to be bereft of any new ideas. In the year before the Sixth Party Congress, junior party officials were remarkably open in telling visiting foreigners about the need for a change. Even the press, though more obliquely, suggested that renewal was necessary.

The Sixth Congress made many leadership changes, some quite remarkable for a ruling communist party, but it did not complete the job. The departing senior leaders, Truong Chinh, Pham Van Dong, and Le Duc Tho, will continue to function as "advisers" to the Central Committee. This leaves the impression that they have not let go altogether and that the new secretary-general, Nguyen Van Linh, must still reckon with their influence on the party/state structure. Linh appears to be making a concerted effort to consolidate his power. Although the slowness of changes in the state apparatus suggests that he is encountering opposition, the new appointments and his conspicuous role at the new Central Committee's Second Plenum in April 1987 indicate that Linh is having some success. On the other hand, the appointment of Pham Hung to replace Pham Van Dong as chairman of the Council of Ministers (prime minister) suggests that party conservatives still have influence. Hung had been interior minister. He has little economic experience and has not been identified with Linh's reforms.

In contrast to the extraordinarily frank discussion of economic and other internal questions which has recently taken place, any differences within Vietnam's leadership over foreign policy issues, e.g., Cambodia, are extremely muted and can only be inferred from hints in speeches and articles. It is impossible to say whether a debate over Cambodian policy and its repercussions is taking place within the leadership, but the evidence suggests it is not. It may be true, as Nayan Chanda put forward in a January 22, 1987, article in the *International Herald Tribune*, that, given differences within the leadership over economic questions, a debate on Cambodian policy would be more divisive than the system could bear. In any case, until the party settles its own affairs, it probably will not seriously examine Cambodian policy but will continue to plod ahead on its present course in Cambodia, which, in spite of its costs, gives promise of success. Perseverance, after all, has been the party's most salient characteristic—one with which it has achieved a great deal.

Vietnam at present regards its dominance over the other two nations of Indochina as of vital importance to its own security. As stated in the Political Report to the Sixth Congress: "The Party is deeply conscious of the fact that developing and consolidating the special relationship among the three Indochina countries, unity and mutual respect for each country's independence and sovereignty, all-round cooperation, and mutual assistance in carrying out national construction and defense constitute a law governing the survival and development of all three fraternal nations." The word "law" is obviously used deliberately. Any abandonment of the party's present policy would require strong leadership and a major shift from attitudes which have permeated all of its history.

The following two sections list the leaders of the party and the government as of mid-1987, highlighting the recent changes.

The Party in Mid-1987

The Sixth Congress made the most radical changes in the party's senior leadership since its coming to power over three decades ago. It appointed a new secretary-general, dropped six members from the Politburo, promoted the two alternate members to full membership, added four new members, and appointed one alternate member. The February and June 1987 changes in the Council of Ministers and Council of State and within the state apparatus complemented these actions. In essence, the Congress passed the torch from the generation which, under Ho Chi Minh until 1969, had guided the party's destinies for almost sixty years.

The Secretary-General

The new secretary-general, Nguyen Van Linh, is seventy-one years old. He replaced seventy-nine-year-old Truong Chinh who had held the job since July 1986, when Le Duan died. Linh was the number-two man at the Central Office for South Vietnam throughout the war to take over the South. Since the war, he had served for two periods as party secretary for Ho Chi Minh City. In July 1986 he became a Central Committee secretary. Dropped from the Politburo by the Fifth Congress in 1982, Linh was reappointed without fanfare in 1985.

During his tenures in Ho Chi Minh City, Linh was identified with efforts toward decentralization and economic reform. He sponsored the letter-writing campaign in the Ho Chi Minh City newspaper *Saigon Gia Phong*, which was the principal forum for public criticism of government policies and practices in the pre-congress period.

In the months after July 1986 there were clear public indications that Linh was slated to succeed Truong Chinh as secretary-general, but it was unclear when. Chinh, in spite of his age, did not act like a lame duck during his tenure. Apparently it took an extraordinary meeting of the leadership on the eve of the congress to get him to step down.

Linh is now the secretary-general, but the extent of his power is not yet defined. His many appearances and visits around Vietnam since the congress give the impression of a man campaigning for office, or rather for the power associated with the office he already holds. The two months' delay between the party congress and major cabinet changes and the six months required to replace the chairmen of the Council of State and Council of Ministers indicate that there are still serious divisions in the party's leadership. Previously, government appointments have been announced almost immediately after or sometimes even preceding a congress. The nature of the changes when they did occur and the dominant role Linh played in the April 1987 Central Committee plenum imply, however, that Linh is solidifying his position. He has been able to move his men and others congenial to his pragmatic economic views into key positions.

In May 1987 Linh, apparently frustrated by the inertia of the party and state apparatuses, launched a column signed "N.L.V." and entitled "Things That Must Be Done Immediately" in *Nhan Dan*, the party newspaper. In it, Linh went directly to the people to criticize specific cases of corruption and inefficiency within the government and state-run enterprises. The first few columns dealt with rotting garlic in a Haiphong warehouse, the high price of jet fuel at Tan Son Nhut Airport, peculation in internal trade, and corruption in the collection of taxes in Ho Chi Minh City. The concerned agencies responded almost immediately in the following issues of *Nhan Dan*. With this unprecedented course of action, Linh seems to be going even farther than his Soviet counterpart, Mikhail Gorbachev, in involving his personal prestige in an effort to use openness as a spur for reform.

Linh gave the principal speech at the June 1987 opening session of the newly selected Eighth National Assembly. In it he emphasized that recent economic measures were aimed at bringing relief to ordinary citizens. "The aim is a reduction in four areas—in the inflation rate, in price rises, in the budget deficit, and in the difficulties encountered by salaried people, members of the armed forces, and in the working masses in general."

Linh seems to be making progress, but he is working against the inertia of a party and state structure most of whose members must perceive his reforms as a threat to their power and economic well-being. In addition, he must contend with senior officials, represented by the Politburo's second-ranking member, Pham Hung, whose successful careers have been based on political and security activities, with economics playing a decidedly secondary role.

The Gang of Three

The most unusual event of the Sixth Congress was the announcement that three of the Politburo's most senior members had decided to step down from the Politburo and the Central Committee. These were Truong Chinh, who, in addition to being secretary-general, was chairman of the Council of State (chief of state); Pham Van Dong, chairman of the Council of Ministers, and Le Duc Tho, a Central Committee secretary. The reasons given were "advanced age and failing health." At the time of the congress, Chinh was seventy-nine; Dong, eighty; and Tho, seventy-five. The congress lauded their decision and appointed them as "advisers" to the Central Committee.

Chinh, Dong, and Tho were three members of a group of five, headed by Le Duan, that had constituted Vietnam's senior leadership during the last decade. (The fifth was Pham Hung, who remains in the Politburo, although he is only slightly younger than Tho. Tho may well have agreed to go only if his long-time rival Chinh would go too.) The service of these three spanned the party's entire history. With Le Duan, they were Ho Chi Minh's closest lieutenants and were the architects, after Ho and Duan, of the party's successes. Their charter as advisers, on its face, seems to give them authority to intervene freely in party and state affairs at every level. The failure of the December session of the National Assembly to replace Chinh and Dong in their state positions immediately after the congress underlined the fact that they still had considerable influence and that choosing their successors was a divisive question for the party's leadership. They were replaced in June at the first meeting of the newly constituted National Assembly. But for six months Vietnam found itself in the anomalous situation for a communist state of having a chief of state and a head of government who were not members of its party's Politburo or even the Central Committee.

The three have made frequent public appearances since the congress. If they continue to play major roles, Nguyen Van Linh will find it difficult to consolidate his position. Chinh particularly seems to want to fill the elder statesman's role played by Ho Chi Minh himself during his last years. Ho, however, remained a Politburo member and party chairman, as well as president, until his death. Le Duc Tho has no government position, but the congress' appointment of his brother, Mai Chi Tho, to the Politburo indicates that he retains considerable influence.

The Other Three

The other three Politburo members who were dropped left less ceremoniously. The congress simply excluded them from its presidium and omitted them from the list of those selected to the new Politburo. These were To Huu and senior generals Van Tien Dung and Chu Huy Man. Huu's demotion had been expected since June 1986 when, apparently because of his responsibility for the failed economic and monetary reforms adopted in the fall of 1985, he was removed as a vice chairman of the Council of Ministers and given no new position. He was regarded as belonging to the party's conservative faction.

Chu Huy Man had been the director of the army's political general department since 1979. In January 1987 he was replaced by Colonel General Nguyen Quyet, whom the Sixth Congress had appointed as a Central Committee secretary. General Man may have been ousted because of the criticism of the leadership of the army, which also brought down Van Tien Dung. Man, however, is in his late sixties or early seventies, so it may simply have been his age. In addition, Le Duc Anh, the new defense minister, probably wanted his own man in the important political director position.

Among the six who left the Politburo, only Van Tien Dung remains in the Central Committee. Nevertheless, he was replaced as defense minister by Le Duc Anh in the February 1987 shakeup of the Council of Ministers. He has yet to be appointed to any new position. In the year preceding the congress, rumors predicted Dung's political demise. The reason most often given was his and his wife's alleged participation in corruption. Another rumor had it that the Army Party meeting preceding the Sixth Congress refused to elect Generals Dung and Man as delegates to the congress so that the Central Committee apparatus had to intervene and appoint them. Whatever his current problems, however, Dung's significant role in both of Vietnam's major wars seems to have saved him from complete political oblivion.

Six Politburo Members Retained

Six men, in addition to Nguyen Van Linh, retained their seats on the Politburo.

Pham Hung, who replaced Pham Van Dong as chairman of the Council of Ministers at the June 1987 National Assembly meeting, is

The Politburo

Secretary General	Nguyen Van Linh
Chairman of the Council of Ministers	Pham Hung
Chairman of the Council of State	Vo Chi Cong
Party Central Committee Secretaries	Do Muoi Nguyen Duc Tam Tran Xuan Bach* Dao Duy Tung* (*alternate*)
Vice Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Chairman of the State Planning Commission	Vo Van Kiet
Senior General and Minister of Defense	Le Duc Anh
Vice Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs	Nguyen Co Thach
Vice Chairman of the Council of Ministers	Dong Sy Nguyen
Party Secretary of Hanoi City	Nguyen Thanh Binh*
Colonel General, Vice Minister of Defense, and Chief of Staff	Doan Khue*
Minister of the Interior	Mai Chi Tho*

* New members named by the Sixth Party Congress

the only survivor of the Politburo's former five-member inner circle. He is now the Politburo's second-ranking member. He was the top man at the Central Office for South Vietnam after General Nguyen Chi Thanh's death in 1967 and was thus the new secretary-general's immediate superior during the latter part of the war. Hung gave up his portfolio as interior minister to Mai Chi Tho in the February 1987 ministerial changes but remained as a vice chairman of the Council of Ministers until his elevation to the chairmanship in June. Given his age, lack of economic experience, and apparent ill health, Hung is a surprising choice to be head of government. His appointment appears to be a gesture to party conservatives. It also replaces one historic figure, Pham Van Dong, with another, the man who directly led the fight to take over the South. Nguyen Van Linh may, in any case, have discovered that he preferred a relatively inactive figure in the chairmanship rather than a younger, perhaps more vigorous individual, who might become a rival locus of power in the party/state structure.

Vo Chi Cong, who is seventy-three years old, moved from the Party Secretariat to replace To Huu as senior vice chairman of the Council of Ministers in the June 1986 cabinet shakeup. In June 1987 he took Troung Chinh's place as Chairman of the Council of State. Cong was a principal figure in the central Vietnamese section of the party's southern apparatus during the war. He might be described as a moderate reformer. Cong implemented the product contract system, which did a great deal to increase agricultural production. Chinh, as the party's chief ideologist, was always a powerful figure, but the position of head of state in Vietnam is not inherently important. It remains to be seen what Cong makes of it.

Do Muoi, who is seventy, was named a Central Committee secretary in April 1987. He had held various governmental economic positions for the last three decades with a six-year gap in the mid-1960s when ill health forced him out of office. He had been a vice chairman of the Council of Ministers since 1969. Muoi's transfer to the Party Secretariat may be aimed at strengthening that body's economic role. The other four Politburo members in the Secretariat have limited experience in economic management.

Vo Van Kiet, vice chairman of the Council of Ministers and chairman of the State Planning Commission, is yet another Politburo member who operated in the south during the war. He is regarded as the party's leading advocate of pragmatism in economic activity and is now the senior vice chairman of the Council of Ministers. Given Pham Hung's relative inexperience in economic matters, Kiet appears to be the state's leading economic operator. He should prosper under Linh, at least for a time. If he cannot do something to address the country's economic woes, however, he may later share the fate of his former rival, To Huu.

Minister of Defense Le Duc Anh, who also served in the south during the war, has been military commander in Cambodia. He is now Vietnam's highest ranking military officer and, with the departure of Van Tien Dung and Chu Huy Man from active service, its only remaining senior general. Nguyen Chi Thanh was killed in 1967. Vo Nguyen Giap is in semi-retirement. Le Trong Tan, the chief of staff, died in December 1986. Vice Minister of Defense Hoang Van Thai also died in 1986. Anh's continued ascent appears to indicate that the party leadership views the military's performance in Cambodia in a positive light. In addition to being commander in Cambodia, Anh has been the leading theoretician on the strategy to be pursued to pacify that country. (See his article in *Tap Chi Quan Doi Nhan Dan.*)

Nguyen Duc Tam, a Central Committee secretary and a northerner, is the head of the Organization Department of the Party Secretariat. In spite of severe criticism of his department's work in the pre-congress period, he seems to have survived nicely and is now, after the secretary-general and Do Muoi, the third-ranking member of the Secretariat. Tam's mentor, Le Duc Tho, used control of the party apparatus as the basis of his power and Tam may be trying to follow his example. His relative youth (he is in his early sixties) positions him well at this point as the eventual successor to Linh.

Promotions

The Sixth Congress promoted to full membership the two Politburo alternates appointed by the Fifth Congress: Nguyen Co Thach and Dong Sy Nguyen. Thach continues as foreign minister and in February 1987 was given the additional rank (and presumably broader powers) of vice chairman of the Council of Ministers. His predecessor as foreign minister, Nguyen Duy Trinh, similarly held both positions.

Dong Sy Nguyen lost his portfolio as minister of communications and transportation in the June 1986 ministerial reshuffle but remained as a vice chairman of the Council of Ministers. Given the party's emphasis on the need to fight corruption in its ranks, some had speculated that Nguyen would be demoted by the Sixth Congress. An August 7, 1986, article by Nguyen An Dinh on corruption among vice ministers of communications and transportation in the newspaper *Lao Dong* noted pointedly: "It is not redundant to indicate that all the above maneuverings happened when Dong Sy Nguyen was still Minister." Despite these rumblings, however, Dong Sy Nguyen was promoted and apparently now plays a larger role in economic affairs than when he had a specific portfolio.

New Members

The Congress appointed four new members directly to full Politburo membership: Tran Xuan Bach, Nguyen Thanh Binh, Doan Khue, and Mai Chi Tho. Bach has been and remains a Central Committee secretary. He is believed to have been posted in Phnom Penh in charge of the political aspects of Vietnam's operations in Cambodia. His rise, like General Anh's, is evidence that close association with Cambodia can have a positive effect on careers.

Nguyen Thanh Binh had been a Central Committee secretary, but has now moved over to be party secretary for Hanoi City. Colonel General Doan Khue joins General Anh as the only other military officer on the Politburo. He had been commander of Military Region Five, which is involved in Cambodian operations. In February 1987 Khue was named to replace Anh as chief of staff when Anh moved up to defense minister. Anh held the position only briefly between General Tan's death in December and his own promotion. Khue was additionally made a vice minister of defense, a position which Tan had also held as chief of staff.

The Politburo's last listed member, Mai Chi Tho, is well connected. In addition to being Le Duc Tho's brother, Tho *frère* has spent the last few years as Nguyen Van Linh's deputy in Ho Chi Minh City. He replaced Pham Hung as interior minister in February 1987, but, unlike his predecessor, is not additionally a vice chairman of the Council of Ministers. Tho was regarded as relatively liberal on economic questions during his time in Ho Chi Minh City.

Alternate

Dao Duy Tung, the sole alternate member of the Politburo, was also appointed by the Sixth Congress as a Central Committee secretary. Tung had been the director of the Central Committee's Propaganda and Training Department. Tran Trong Tan, who had worked for Nguyen Van Linh on the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee, has replaced Tung in that position. Presumably Tung will continue to supervise propaganda and training from his new eminence.

The Secretariat

A significant shakeup also occurred among the Central Committee secretaries, who now number fourteen. The Sixth Congress dropped five of the nine incumbents. Only Tran Kien, among those not addi-

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The Party Secretariat

Secretary General Nguyen Van Linh

Secretaries

- Do Muoi*
- Nguyen Duc Tam, *Director, Party Central Committee Organization Department*
- Tran Xuan Bach
- Dao Duy Tung**
- Tran Kien, *Chairman, Party Central Control Commission*
- Le Phuoc Tho,** *Director, Party Central Committee Agriculture Department*
- Nguyen Quyet,** *Colonel General, Director of the Political General Department of the Army*
- Dam Quang Trung,** *Lieutenant General*
- Vu Oanh,** *Director, Party Central Committee Economic and Planning Department*
- Nguyen Khanh,** *Vice Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Minister–Secretary General of the Council of Ministers*
- Tran Quyet,** *Lieutenant General and Chief Procurator*
- Tran Quoc Huong,** *Director, Party Central Committee Internal Affairs Department*
- Phan The Duyet,** *Chairman, Vietnam Confederation of Trade Unions*

* Transferred from the Council of Ministers to the Secretariat in April 1987.

** Appointed by the Sixth Party Congress.

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tionally in the Politburo (Nguyen Van Linh, Do Muoi, Nguyen Duc Tam, and Tran Xuan Bach), remains. Kien also continues as chairman of the party's Central Control Commission. Four of the nine members appointed by the congress are from the Secretariat's staff. The others include three military men: Colonel General Nguyen

Quyet, who has also been promoted from deputy director to director of the army's Political General Department (replacing Chu Huy Man); Colonel General Dam Quang Trung, who has been commander of the First Military Region on the Chinese border; and Lieutenant General Tran Quyet, who had been a vice minister of interior since 1975, but was named chief procurator (the state's principal prosecuting official) in June 1987. Le Phuc Tho, who was most recently party secretary for Hau Giang Province, was also named to the Secretariat. He has been appointed head of the Central Committee's Agriculture Department and represented Vietnam at a February 10–11, 1987, meeting of party agricultural secretaries from Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (C.M.E.A.) countries. The remaining secretary appointed by the Congress is Phan The Duyet, chairman of the Trade Union Federation. In April 1987 Do Muoi, a Politburo member, was transferred to the Secretariat from the Council of Ministers, thus bringing the number of secretaries to fourteen.

Rejuvenation

The changes in the Central Committee made by the Sixth Congress cannot be described as a youth movement. According to the Vietnam News Agency, the average age of the 173 members of the new Central Committee is just over fifty-six. Over 32 percent are sixty or older. Only one member is under forty years of age. Twelve percent joined the party before 1945; 82 percent, between 1945 and 1965; and 6 percent, since 1965. In other words, only ten members of the committee have been in the party fewer than eighteen years. In addition, though only fragmentary data have been made public on provincial and municipal party secretaries, what is known suggests that the majority have stayed in place.

The Government

The Vietnamese Communist Party, through a February 16, 1987, decree of the Council of State, carried out most of the changes in the government apparatus presaged by the actions of the Sixth Congress. The decree made major changes in the structure of government organizations and named new men to over half of the positions on the

Council of Ministers. The June 18–19, 1987, meeting of the newly selected National Assembly completed the process by naming new heads of state and government. The December 1987 meeting of the National Assembly could have replaced Chinh as chairman of the Council of State, but did not. His behavior in the pre-congress run-up, including his many public appearances and particularly his October 19, 1986, speech at the Hanoi City Party meeting in which he abandoned a lifetime of ideological strictness and embraced pragmatism with the fervor of a convert, indicates how strongly he resisted letting go as secretary-general. After the congress he used his Council of State position to remain in the public eye. In the meantime, his coeval, Pham Van Dong, who apparently wanted to retire, remained as chairman of the Council of Ministers. In June, however, both stepped down to be replaced by Vo Chi Cong and Pham Hung.

Vice Chairmen

There are now nine vice chairmen of the Council. Three—Vo Van Kiet, Nguyen Co Thach, and Dong Sy Nguyen—are Politburo members. (Do Muoi, who had been a vice chairman since 1969, remained in that position during the February changes, but in April 1987 was named a Party Central Committee secretary. Pham Hung and Vo Chi Cong also remained as vice chairmen until they were promoted in June 1987.) Kiet and Nguyen had previously been vice chairmen. Both Kiet and Thach, respectively chairman of the State Planning Commission and foreign minister, have ministerial portfolios. Nguyen does not. General Vo Nguyen Giap, who has been a vice chairman since 1954 but is not in the Politburo, kept his position. The other two non-Politburo vice chairmen, Tran Quynh and Vu Dinh Lieu, were dropped.

In addition to Thach, there are five new vice chairmen. One of these, Nguyen Khanh, was also named as minister-secretary-general of the Council of Ministers. Khanh is additionally a Central Committee secretary. This unusual dual status, his former work as *chef de cabinet* in the Party Secretariat and his high rank, indicate that Khanh has been brought in to strengthen the coordinating role of the Council.

Nguyen Ngoc Triu had been minister of agriculture but was given no specific portfolio in this reshuffle. He may be meant to supervise the newly created Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry. In June 1987, however, articles appeared in the press concerning corruption in the Ministry of Agriculture during the period of Triu's stewardship. His equivocating reply may bode ill for his political future.

Tran Duc Luong has been director of the General Department of Geology, an organization which the decree renamed the General Department of Mines and Geology. Luong may continue as supervisor of this body, which presumably took on some of the functions of the Ministry of Mines and Coal along with its expanded name. The Ministry of Mines and Coal was one of those reorganized by the decree.

Doan Duy Thanh continues as minister of foreign trade. His elevation may be designed to give increased emphasis to the effort to increase exports, one of the three priority economic activities designated by the Sixth Congress.

Nguyen Van Chinh was also appointed to replace Bui Quang Tao as chairman of the State Inspection Commission. Tao had not held ministerial rank. Chinh's designation may be intended to give more emphasis to the fight against corruption. Along with the economy, this was a principal topic of the pre-congress public discussion. Chinh had been minister of food, but the February decree folded the Ministry of Food into the new Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry. He was party secretary for Long An until 1984. In that position he successfully encouraged increased agricultural production through the contract system.

Ministerial Restructuring

The February 1987 Council of State decree also made changes in several government bodies. A major aspect of the restructuring was the decision to combine, and presumably streamline, the activities of some basic economic ministries. The changes are outlined below:

- *A Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry was established by combining the ministries of Agriculture, Food Industry, and Food.* The head of this new conglomerate is Nguyen Cong Tan, who had been a vice minister of agriculture. The amalgamation seems intended to breathe bureaucratic life into the decision of the Sixth Congress to give first emphasis in economic activity to "grain and food products."

The Government

Chairman of the Council of State Vo Chi Cong*

Chairman of the National Assembly Le Quang Dao*

Council of Ministers—Principal Members

Chairman	Pham Hung*
Vice Chairmen	Vo Van Kiet Nguyen Co Thach* Dong Sy Nguyen Vo Nguyen Giap Nguyen Khanh* Nguyen Ngoc Triu* Nguyen Van Chinh* Doan Duy Thanh* Tran Duc Luong*

Ministers

Agriculture and Food Industry	Nguyen Cong Tan*
Building	Phan Ngoc Tuong
Communications and Transportation	Bui Danh Luu
Culture	Tran Van Phac*
Defense	Le Duc Anh*
Education	Pham Minh Hac*
Energy	Vu Ngoc Hai*
Engineering and Metals	Phan Thanh Liem*
Finance	Hoang Quy*
Foreign Affairs	Nguyen Co Thach
Foreign Trade	Doan Duy Thanh
Forestry	Phan Xuan Dot
Higher and Vocational Education	Tran Hong Quan*
Home Trade	Hoang Minh Thang

Information	Tran Hoan*
Interior	Mai Chi Tho*
Justice	Phan Hien
Labor, War Invalids and Social Welfare	Nguyen Ky Cam*
Light Industry	Vu Tuan*
Marine Products	Nguyen Tien Trinh
Public Health	Dan Hoi Xuan
Supply	Hoang Duc Nghi
Water Conservation	Nguyen Canh Dinh
Other Members	
Chairman, State Planning Commission	Vo Van Kiet
Minister–First Vice Chairman, State Planning Commission	Dau Ngoc Xuan*
Chairman, State Price Commission	Phan Van Tiem*
Chairman, State Commission for Economic and Cultural Cooperation with Laos and Kampuchea	Dang Thi
Director General, State Bank	Lu Minh Chau
Chairman, State Commission for Capital Construction	Do Quoc Sam
Chairman, State Inspection Commission	Nguyen Van Chinh*
Chairman, State Commission for Science and Technology	Dang Huu
Minister–Secretary General, Council of Ministers	Nguyen Khanh*
Chairman, State Commission for Economic Relations with Foreign Countries	Vo Dong Giang*

* Appointed in February or June 1987.

- *A Ministry of Energy was created by merging the Ministry of Power with the Ministry of Mines and Coal.* Vu Ngoc Hai, an official of the Northern Region Electric Power Cooperative, became the new minister. In his December 24, 1986, report to the National Assembly, Vo Van Kiet stated that Vietnam produced the planned amount of coal in 1986. He added, however, that electricity generation during the year fell short of plan and that the quality of the coal provided "was not guaranteed." (In state-planned economies, this formulation usually means that neither the coal nor the electricity target was met. It is, of course, easy to meet a planned coal production figure if the "coal" includes a lot of associated rock.) The ministerial amalgamation seems to be aimed at ensuring greater coordination between the mining of coal and consumption by its principal user. Transport of coal, however, still remains in the hands of the Ministry of Communications and Transportation which, according to Kiet's report, missed its target figure for carrying goods between the North and South by 17 percent.

- *A Ministry of Labor, War Invalids and Social Welfare was formed by combining the ministries of Labor and of War Invalids and Social Welfare.* The new minister is Nguyen Ky Cam, who had been party secretary for Nghe Tinh Province. The former labor minister, Dao Thien Thi, had also been head of the Party's Central Steering Committee for the Distribution of the Labor Force and Population. According to Vo Van Kiet's December 24, 1986, report, the effort to move people to "new economic zones" reached only 55 percent of plan in 1986. That failure could explain Thi's departure. The minister of war invalids and social welfare had been Colonel General Song Hao, who was for many years the army's chief ideologue and a close lieutenant of General Giap. With Giap's slide from power, Hao, too, ceased to play an important role and was assigned to this relatively unimportant ministry in 1982. He was dropped from the Central Committee by the Sixth Congress. This latest ministerial dismissal probably ends his career.

- *A new Ministry of Information was established and the Vietnam Radio and Television Commission dissolved.* The new minister is Tran Hoan. There are two Tran Hoans: one in the Party Secretariat's Culture and Arts Department and the other at the Foreign Ministry. The former seems the more likely to have been given this new ministry.

- *A Commission for Economic Relations with Foreign Countries was established.* This is apparently being supervised by Nguyen Co Thach. Vo Dong Giang, formerly Thach's chief lieutenant at the Foreign Ministry, is its chairman. Just what its duties will be is unclear. The Ministry of Foreign Trade presumably remains in charge of the new drive for exports. This would leave foreign investment, remittances, and possibly even foreign aid as areas of influence for the new commission. The commission may have been set up in anticipation of the long-awaited new law on foreign investment which the party's leaders no doubt hope will bring a significant increase in hard currency investment. There is almost none now. The law seems to be difficult to draft, however. In spite of predictions to the contrary, it was not submitted to the June 1987 National Assembly session. The new commission may also have been established to encourage overseas Vietnamese to send remittances to their families or to invest in Vietnam. Vo Van Kiet's report to the Sixth Party Congress stated: "We must pay great attention to and create favorable conditions for the expansion of various activities to collect foreign currency—such as tourism and money sent home from overseas Vietnamese—and must eliminate all inconvenient principles, rules and regulations, and procedures currently obstructing and restricting these activities." The congress' political report noted: "Along with the promulgation of the investment code, we should have policies and measures to create favorable conditions for foreigners and overseas Vietnamese to come to our country for business cooperation. Importance should be attached to organizing and encouraging overseas Vietnamese to contribute to national construction in various ways, including technical and capital investment, bringing into play their potential for helping broaden our cooperative relations with foreign countries, companies, and economic organizations."

- *The Commission for the Protection of Mothers and Children became a part of the Ministry of Education; the General Department of Job Training was assigned to the Ministry of Higher and Vocational Training; and the State Nationalities Commission was disestablished.* This last organization should not be confused with the Nationalities Council of the Council of State, which can be expected to remain the principal locus within the government for coordination of policies toward Vietnam's ethnic minorities. There is also a Nationalities Department in the Secretariat of the Party Central Committee.

New Ministers

In addition to the vice chairmen appointments, the Council of State named a total of fifteen men to ministerial-level positions. Seven have already been discussed: General Le Duc Anh to the Ministry of Defense; Mai Chi Tho to Interior; Nguyen Cong Tan to Agriculture and Food Industry; Vu Ngoc Hai to Energy; Nguyen Ky Cam to Labor, War Invalids and Social Welfare; Tran Hoan to Information; and Nguyen Van Chinh to the State Inspection Commission.

The eight other newly designated members are the following:

- Hoang Quy was named as minister of finance. Quy had been minister-first vice chairman of the State Planning Commission and is presumably a protégé of Vo Van Kiet. He replaced Vu Tuan, who had held the position only since June 1986, when he took over from Chu Tam Tuc in the ministerial shakeup occasioned by the failure of the 1985 economic and monetary reforms.

- Vu Tuan was appointed as minister of light industry. The peripatetic Tuan was minister of food industry from 1981 until being named minister of finance in June 1986. He is obviously regarded as competent. His appointment to the Ministry of Light Industry would appear to reflect the fact that the Sixth Party Congress made production of consumer goods the nation's second economic priority, superseded only by that of producing more grain and food products.

- Phan Thanh Liem replaced Nguyen Van Kha as minister of engineering and metals. Kha had held the job for ten years. Liem will presumably bring a more technological leadership to the ministry. His most recent position was as director of Machine Tool Manufacturing Factory Number 1.

- Tran Hong Quan, who was a vice minister, took over from Nguyen Dinh Tu as minister of higher and vocational education.

- Pham Minh Hac replaced Mrs. Nguyen Thi Binh as minister of education. Hac had been director of the Ministry's Education and Science Institute. Mrs. Binh's departure removes the only woman member of the Council of Ministers. She gained fame as the Provisional Revolutionary Government's chief delegate to the Paris peace talks. The Sixth Congress dropped her from the Party Central Committee. There has been some speculation, given her position as one of the few Vietnamese officials who is well known in the West, that she might be named as Vietnam's United Nations representative. The New York post has been empty for almost three years. This vacancy may have been caused by Vietnamese unhappiness with how Vietnam has been treated at the United Nations on the Cambodian issue and its lack of progress on normalizing relations with the United States. For the present, however, Mrs. Binh is serving as a deputy director of the Foreign Relations Department of the Party Central Committee.

- Tran Van Phac, who had been a vice minister, was named as minister of culture. Phac had been acting minister since the ministerial changes of June 1986.

- Dau Ngoc Xuan, already a vice chairman of the State Planning Commission, replaced Hoang Quy as minister-first vice chairman when the latter was named as minister of finance. This promotion from within demonstrates Vo Van Kiet's ability to protect his fiefdom.

- Phan Van Tiem was appointed as chairman of the State Price Commission. Tiem, whom the Sixth Congress promoted to alternate membership on the Central Committee, had been a party official in Ho Chi Minh City and, more recently, the acting chairman of the Price Commission. He is obviously a Nguyen Van Linh protégé and has been given a most difficult assignment. Inflation is almost impossible to measure in a communist state such as Vietnam, but press reports put it as high as 700–1000 percent in 1986. Hyperinflation preoccupies the Vietnamese people. In his report to the Sixth Congress Vo Van Kiet stated: "The situation of prices, finance, and money continues its course of complex fluctuations. This problem has been urgently dealt with. In the days ahead, the most urgent task is to slow down the rate of price increases in order to stabilize it." Revealing his depth of concern rather than an economic grasp of the subject, Kiet continued with the tautology: "It must be stressed that an important cause of the monthly escalation of market prices is that inflation has reached a serious level." These rises in prices have struck particularly hard at those in the money economy, including party and state cadres, military men and factory workers—all groups which the party wishes to propitiate. Tiem has not been given a sinecure.

The Army

Changes will have to be made in the upper ranks of the military in addition to those occasioned by the political demise of Van Tien Dung and Chu Huy Man. Three vice ministers of defense have died in the last few months: Senior Generals Hoang Van Thai and Le Trong Tan and Colonel General Dinh Duc Thien (another brother of Le Duc Tho). Two other vice ministers, Colonel General Bui Phung and Lieutenant General Dang Vu Hiep, were dropped from the Central Committee. With Le Duc Anh's elevation to defense minister, someone will have to replace him in Cambodia. As yet there has been no announcement of a reconstituted Party Central Committee Military Commission. The Vietnamese have indicated to the press that the army, over the next few years, is to be reduced in size (they did not say how much) and made more efficient. Such a program would no doubt cause the retirement of many veteran officers.

Foreign Relations

The foreign policy of the regime in Vietnam can be summed up in these words taken from a September 2, 1986, editorial in the Hanoi newspaper *Nhan Dan:* "Staying firmly united and comprehensively cooperating with the Soviet Union and definitely relying on Soviet assistance is the fundamental principle as well as the basic policy of our Party and state." Indeed since 1978, Vietnam's position on international issues has been easy to predict. It is the same as the Soviet Union's. Previously, Hanoi had maintained a balance in its relations with Moscow and Beijing which allowed it to receive assistance from both Communist powers. This course of action proved impossible to continue after 1975, however, in the face of China's hostility and its backing of Democratic Kampuchea. In 1978 Vietnam moved solidly into the Soviet sphere. It joined the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (C.M.E.A.) in June 1978 and signed a treaty of "friendship and cooperation" with the Soviets in November of that year. Soviet assistance allows Vietnam to maintain its large military establishment and is the principal prop for its economy. Moscow also gives the Vietnamese diplomatic support on the Cambodian issue. Vietnam, for its part, supports the Soviet Union on all international questions, even those such as Afghanistan which cause it difficulties with the Third World. Hanoi has also allowed the Soviets to establish a major air and naval base at Camranh Bay. There are strains in this relationship, but the advantages to each of the partners are such that it should endure.

Animosity Toward China

Vietnam's second most important international relationship is with China, and it is one of considerable animosity. The two countries fight directly on their mutual border and by proxy in Cambodia. In addition to their argument over Cambodia, they have minor differences over their land frontier and major ones regarding their maritime boundary in the Tonkin Gulf and the Spratly and Parcel island groups. Hanoi, though it formally endorses efforts at Sino–Soviet reconciliation, is obviously concerned that its interests might be part of the bargain. Then Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Vo Dong Giang may have been less than candid, therefore, when he told a December 16, 1986, press conference regarding Soviet efforts toward rapprochement with China: "The Vietnamese side also firmly believes the Soviet Union has never undermined the interests of any third nation." It may be noteworthy, too, that this statement was carried on Hanoi's Chinese language radio broadcast of the press conference, but not in the domestic version. Whatever their concerns about the Soviets, however, the Vietnamese have no doubt regarding what the Chinese are trying to obtain: "While seeking to improve their relations with fraternal socialist countries, they have been seeking for every way to isolate Vietnam" (Trung Dung). Vietnam has called for talks with China to seek a solution to their differences. However, Beijing has refused unless the Vietnamese withdraw from Cambodia.

ASEAN

Hanoi's principal purpose in its relations with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations is to destroy ASEAN's unity on the Cambodian question. This means cultivating Indonesia and, to a lesser extent, Malaysia, the two ASEAN nations which are most concerned about China as a threat to the area, and trying to separate them from Thailand and Singapore, which see Vietnamese expansion as the most acute danger. Vietnam has also worked directly on Thailand, with which it has diplomatic relations, to underline the dangers of assisting the Khmer resistance and the unwisdom of relying on China.

The Third World

Vietnam runs with the pack on most Third World questions. Its position on Cambodia and Afghanistan causes it problems, however. Almost every Third World forum becomes an arena for the struggle between ASEAN and Hanoi over Cambodian representation. Thus far, except for the United Nations itself, most gatherings have adopted the empty seat formula, which, given the lopsided United Nations votes against Vietnam's continued occupation of Cambodia, could be regarded as a triumph for Vietnamese diplomacy. India is Vietnam's principal non-communist Third World ally and the only important non-communist state to recognize Vietnam's client regime in Phnom Penh, the People's Republic of Kampuchea, something even Rumania has failed to do.

The West

Hanoi has diplomatic and trade relations with the major Western nations as well as with Japan. These were set back by its invasion of Cambodia, however, which also caused Western countries to reduce their aid sharply. There has been some erosion of the Western position on Cambodia, but credits and aid from the West, except from Sweden, remain negligible. Even Sweden, after years of work on its controversial Bai Bang paper factory, seems to have grown disenchanted. The Swedish government announced on April 3, 1987, that it would end its assistance if Vietnam did not carry out its pledge to withdraw from Cambodia by 1990. Japan is very interested in expanding its commercial relations with Vietnam, but even it is constrained somewhat by the Western and ASEAN positions on Cambodia.

The United States

Both the Carter and the Reagan Administrations have stated that the United States will not establish diplomatic relations with Vietnam until that nation participates in a comprehensive settlement in Cambodia which is acceptable to ASEAN and involves withdrawal of the Vietnamese Army. Hanoi has made plain that it would like to move toward normal relations and a removal of the U.S. ban on trade but has thus far been unwilling to meet the American precondition. In the meantime, the United States and Vietnam have had numerous meetings in recent years, at both the policy and experts levels, on refugees and Americans missing or otherwise unaccounted for in Indochina. The latter issue is one of great political and humanitarian importance in the United States. Hanoi has denied it is holding American prisoners but has agreed to discuss the subject. It has cooperated in the recovery and return of the remains of missing Americans, but, in the view of the American government, at a less than satisfactory level. During 1986, Hanoi, apparently frustrated by its inability to use either issue to obtain concessions in other areas, reduced the level of its cooperation significantly.

The Economy

"Our Party and people, although they have a wealth of experience in leading and fighting a people's war, have little knowledge or experience in building and managing the economy." This quotation, from a Vietnamese official writing about his country's economy, sums up half of Vietnam's economic problems. The other half comes from the fact that Vietnam is very poor, much poorer than the other countries of Southeast Asia, excepting, of course, Laos and Cambodia.

Since 1975, Vietnam has been pursuing two basic economic goals. The first is to increase production; the second, to carry out "socialist transformation," i.e., to bring under state control or collectivize the private economy, which exists principally in the South. Vietnam's leaders have often found these goals to be in conflict, and the argument about which is to be given precedence strategically and in particular instances has split the leadership into "ideologues" and "pragmatists." Truong Chinh had been the leader of the former group while Le Duc Tho headed the latter. They have both stepped down now, and the new secretary-general is a leading exponent of the pragmatist side of the argument.

Other evidence supports the view that the pragmatist school is in the ascendent. Vo Chi Cong, the new chairman of the Council of State, is known as a moderate reformer. Vo Van Kiet, the party's leading advocate of economic reform, has increased his power and has installed people close to him in key positions in the state economic apparatus. Other appointments have brought technocrats or men associated with Linh's tenure in Ho Chi Minh City into important jobs. The documents from the Sixth Party Congress generally emphasized increasing production over "socialist transformation." Additionally, in April 1987, the Party Central Committee adopted a program of economic reforms which laid great emphasis on private initiative.

This does not mean, however, that the struggle is over. The pragmatists who have come to power are communists too, and they believe in eventual "socialist transformation." The enormity of Vietnam's economic ills has forced "transformation" to be deemphasized for the moment, but it is a fundamental principle. This tension between political ideology and the need to adapt an economic and political framework which has proved ill-suited to economic progress and the realities of the world exists in all communist states.

Linh and his colleagues face a formidable task. Vietnam's *per capita* gross national product (G.N.P.) is one of the lowest in the world. Its population has been growing at a rate of 2.2 percent a year. Millions are unemployed. Inflation is out of control. Even reported economic growth has slowed and many important planned target figures were not met in 1986. Vietnam's principal source of aid, the Soviet Union, though it has committed itself to increase assistance significantly, has many other calls on its resources. No other important donors appear likely to surface as long as the Cambodian question remains unsettled. And, because of the situation in Cambodia and China's hostility, Vietnam must maintain a large army, which at present absorbs about half of the state budget.

Vietnam's economic record since the war is not impressive. In the first few years after taking over the South, the Vietnamese government, inspired by Le Duan and Truong Chinh, concentrated on rapid "socialist transformation" and unification. The leadership appeared to believe that greatly increased production would come about as a by-product of this transformation. The results were disastrous. By mid-1979, a change of course was necessary. In September 1979 the Central Committee officially accepted the fact that the economies of the North and South were different and would remain so for some time. This meant that efforts to eliminate the private economy in the South would be slowed and that it would continue to exist for the foreseeable future. In addition, the party adopted measures which gave some incentives to farmers to increase production and loosened controls on agriculture and light industry.

The early results were gratifying. Vietnam's most important economic index, grain production, which had declined in 1977 and 1978, began to increase. Between 1979 and 1984 it went up by over 5 million metric tons, an average of 0.8 million tons a year. In 1985 and 1986, however, grain production leveled off. The rate of increase fell to only 0.3 million tons each year. Other economic indicators similarly tailed off.

In mid-1985, the leadership concluded that further significant changes were necessary. These were principally focused on the non-agricultural sector and were approved in June 1985 by the Eighth Plenum of the Central Committee, established by the Fifth Party Congress and promulgated by government directives in September 1985. These changes could be divided into three broad categories:

- *Elimination of subsidies.* Many Vietnamese workers received part of their wages in essential goods (rice, cooking oil, etc.) or in access to these goods at prices much lower than at state stores or on the free market. The amount of goods received was affected by family size and other non-work-related considerations. The cash wage of such workers was less significant than their subsidies. The Eighth Plenum decided to eliminate this system and to have enterprises and government agencies pay employees cash wages at a level which would allow them to purchase essential goods at unsubsidized prices.
- *Enterprise autonomy.* Central control of enterprises was to be greatly reduced. Subsidies from the state were to be eliminated. Enterprises were to make their own economic decisions within the strictures of the plan, to pay workers wages which encouraged increased production, to set prices with a minimum of interference, and to pay their own way.
- *Monetary reform.* In an effort to reduce the money supply and to eliminate illicit stores of cash, the old currency was called in and exchanged for new at a rate of ten old dong for one new one. The official rate of exchange against the dollar was also adjusted to a somewhat more realistic level.

The results of these directives were not what the framers had hoped. Inflation, already a problem, worsened dramatically. The new cash wages did not keep up and subsidies had to be reinstated to keep workers from starving. The new "autonomy" for enterprises did not result in significantly higher levels of production. In reaction to these failures, Tran Phuong, an important economic theoretician, was let go as a vice chairman of the Council of Ministers on January 30, 1986.

By June, more drastic measures were necessary and Politburo member To Huu and several ministers involved in economic and financial areas were dropped from the Council of Ministers. Public confidence in the ability of the party leadership to direct the economy plummeted. The Eighth Plenum's reforms themselves were not, however, called directly into question, only the way they had been carried out by the state.

This, then, was the economic situation confronted by the Sixth Party Congress. The Congress adopted no new radical departures from previous policies, but rather concluded that what was needed was better administration, by both the party and the state. It decided to reinforce the party's earlier resolution to channel the nation's economic energies into three main tasks: grain and food production, consumer goods production, and exports.

Agriculture

Agriculture is by far the most important sector of Vietnam's economy. It employs about 70 percent of the nation's work force and produces over 40 percent of the national income. In his December 15 report to the Sixth Congress, the vice-chairman of the Council of Ministers, Vo Van Kiet, outlined a program designed to increase grain production to 22–23 million tons by 1990. This is an ambitious goal, although it has been scaled back from the previously published 1990 target of 25–27 million tons. The planned figure for 1986 was 20 million tons, but what was actually achieved, according to Kiet, was 18.5 million. Perhaps because production targets have not been met during the last few years, planned grain production for 1987 is only 19.2 million tons. Even that modest goal may be difficult to achieve, however. Only once since 1982 has the annual increase been more than 0.4 million tons. Kiet indicated that the primary area of emphasis for increased grain production is to be the Mekong Delta, with the North's Red River Delta playing a secondary role.

Kiet went on to say that the party had to correct the two major limiting factors in increasing production: lack of incentives for farmers and the state's inability to deliver necessities such as seeds, pesticides, and fertilizers on time and in sufficient amounts. He did not say, however, how the present unacceptable situation would be changed.

Kiet's December 26 report to the National Assembly indicated problems in other agricultural areas. Short-term industrial crops fell 11.4 percent short of their 1986 target. Peanuts, soybeans, jute, and cotton increased over 1985 levels, but sugarcane and tobacco were down. An August 5, 1986, article by Tran Dinh Ba in *Quan Doi Nhan Dan* reported: "During the past season the total national sugarcane area declined by 40 percent and sugar production by an estimated 50 percent, in comparison with the previous season." The reason given by a former sugar farmer for this phenomenon was: "If I grew sugar I would lose money in all ways." Given the cost of factors of production and the price paid by the state, it did not make sense to grow sugarcane.

Similar disincentives exist in the animal husbandry sector, where Kiet reported: "The hog population in particular has reached a level almost equal to that in 1985. Apart from the reason for the shortage of animal feed, the price for pork has not been able to catch up with the fluctuations of food prices and has therefore affected the growth of the hog population." An article by Dong Xuan Mai in the August 6, 1986, issue of *Quan Doi Nhan Dan* pointed out that in Minh Hai Province, a leading swine producing area, pig farmers lost 400 to 500 dong for every 100 kilograms of live pork they sold to the state and that the province's pig herd, which had numbered 318,000 in 1984, had declined by 50,000 head in 1985.

The principal incentive for farmers to increase production has been their right, after paying taxes and meeting contract obligations, to sell their surplus at a free price. In a majority of cases, this means to a private trader rather than the state. The party acknowledges that this is an important incentive, but at the same time has made abolishing private trade a major goal. It not only finds private trade doctrinally repugnant, but also blames it as a major contributor to inflation. The party envisions a monopsonistic situation, in which the farmer or cooperative freely negotiates a price with the state as the only buyer. It is hard to believe that incentives would not decline under such a system. For the next few years, however, the present situation will continue as the party acknowledges that it is not in a position to carry out all the functions now performed by private traders.

The party is organizing a Collective Peasants' Association. This is presumably an attempt to improve communication between farmers and the central administration.

Consumer Goods

Increased production of consumer goods is needed to meet the needs of the Vietnamese people, to provide incentives for work, and to combat inflation. In 1986, however, production fell short of the planned figure. In addition, Vo Van Kiet's National Assembly report acknowledged that the quality of the goods produced continued to decline. Kiet blamed uncoordinated supplies of raw materials and low wages for lack of success, but made no suggestions about how to solve the problem.

The Council of Ministers' resolution on December 2, 1986, which regularized the situation of the "family economy," was a new step on the part of the government. Small private manufacturers are an important source of goods in Vietnam, and it appears that the party has decided that for the time being they will have to be tolerated and even encouraged.

Exports

Vietnam's foreign trade has been in serious imbalance ever since 1975. Its exports during the past few years have amounted to approximately $500 million a year while imports have run at about $1.7 billion. Most of this trade ($1.2 billion in imports and $300 million in exports) is with the Soviet Union, which translates any imbalances into long-term loans. Imports from the hard currency area amounted to about $600 million in 1984 with exports at half that number. Japan, Hong Kong, and Singapore are Vietnam's principal non-communist trading partners. Its most important exports are agricultural and maritime products and coal. Another export, which is harder to measure, is labor. Vietnam has sent thousands of laborers to the Soviet Union and several labor-short East European nations. Under this program, the host country gives Hanoi credit toward its debt in addition to paying the workers' wages.

In his report to the Sixth Party Congress Vo Van Kiet called for increased exports, greater "labor cooperation with foreign countries," and more assistance from C.M.E.A. member-states.

Hanoi suffers from two separate foreign trade problems. The first, and most important, is with the Soviet Union, which has grown annoyed with Vietnam's inability to deliver promised commodities in a timely fashion and in agreed-to quantities. Obviously, whatever Vietnam does will be marginal when compared with the size of its trade deficit with the Soviet Union, but the Vietnamese government must show the Soviets that it is trying. As the Sixth Congress' Political Report stated: "To strengthen solidarity and all-round cooperation with the Soviet Union is always the cornerstone of the foreign policy of our Party and state."

Vietnam's other basic trade problem is with the hard currency area. The Vietnamese need to obtain some manufactured goods that are unavailable in the Soviet Union or that are of better quality than those produced by the Soviet Union, as well as raw materials from free market economies. Given the paucity of Vietnamese exports and the demands of the Soviet Union, however, Hanoi has had to look for other sources of hard currency—most importantly remittances from overseas Vietnamese. In his speech to the Sixth Party Congress, then Deputy Foreign Minister Hoang Binh Son noted that over a million Vietnamese lived abroad, half of them in the United States. Kiet made plain in his report to the Congress that he saw this group as an important source of hard currency. It is impossible to put a figure on these remittances, many of which take place outside of official channels, but they are substantial in Vietnamese terms.

There was nothing in the work of the Sixth Congress and the subsequent National Assembly which would lead to the conclusion that there will be radical changes in the short term in Vietnam's balance of trade and payments. In the longer run, however, if export crops such as coffee, rubber, and tea increase and oil production in the South China Sea allows for a reduction in petroleum imports, the situation might improve. The Soviet Union has a great demand for tropical products and Vietnam's only competition within the C.M.E.A. is Cuba.

Future of Economic Reform

In sum, things look bleak for Vietnam's economy in the short run. Although the new leadership gives evidence of being more willing to experiment than its predecessor, what the new team has been identified with so far is efforts to try to make the system work better, not to change it. The new Vietnamese leaders have not been blind to what has been happening in China, and some of Vietnam's reforms seem to be influenced by events there. The Vietnamese Communist Party seems, however, to be a much more cautious animal than the Chinese breed. Moving by consensus, the Vietnamese Communist Party never approached the extremes of radicalism prevalent in Maoist China. Similarly, its reforms will likely not go as far as those of Dengist China, at least not in the next few years. Given its dependence on the Soviet Union, Vietnam may be influenced by the outcome of the reform efforts in Moscow. The Soviet Union's new emphases are often cited by Linh and other Vietnamese officials. But the distances in culture and type of economy suggest that any "trickle-down" effect from future Soviet reforms will be slow.

Conclusion

Any significant change in Vietnam's policies toward its neighbors in Indochina will probably not result from internal Vietnamese considerations. The leadership of Vietnam finds the present Indochinese situation tolerable and believes that if Vietnam follows its present course it will achieve its aims. In pursuing this course, Vietnam must remain a garrison state, which, in spite of Soviet assistance, is a significant drain on its limited resources. It must also deny itself the benefits which might accrue if it were to end its international isolation and actively seek better relations with its neighbors and the West. Hanoi seems willing to accept these costs, while naturally maneuvering to minimize them. Although external actors such as the Soviet Union and China could alter Vietnam's course, for its part, Vietnam appears convinced that hegemony over Laos and Cambodia is necessary for its security and is a goal which can be achieved.

Or, stated in Vietnamese terms: "Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia have been closely attached to one another by a particularly rare relationship. It is a life and death relationship and is one of the factors deciding all victories of the revolutions of the three countries, as affirmed by history" (Tran Quoc Manh).

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Vietnam and Laos: Master and Apprentice

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During the past forty years, the communist leaders of Vietnam and Laos have developed intimate ties. They served together in the revolutionary struggle against the French colonial regime. With the defeat and departure of the French, their joint struggle turned to ridding their countries of the U.S. presence and the regimes which it supported. During this joint effort, they developed what both officially refer to as a "special relationship."

As the more powerful member of this relationship, Vietnam has made a significant imprint upon the communist movement in Laos. The Vietnamese communists have helped to recruit the Laotian leadership, shape its ideology, develop its military forces, and organize its government. It is not by chance that the Vietnamese find the current regime in Laos to be a politically reliable junior partner.

I believe that the Vietnamese leaders are pleased with their relationship with Laos, and they have the model of Laos in mind as they attempt to shape the politics of Cambodia—although they must make important adjustments for the Cambodian context. They realize that the cultural and historical context within Cambodia is much different from that of Laos, that the Cambodian national animosity toward Vietnam is far deeper and much less easily managed. The Vietnamese did not have the same long-standing, intimate interaction with the Cambodian revolutionary leadership as they had in Laos. Cambodian opposition to Vietnamese intervention is much more difficult to deal with and even more important, the international opposition to their domination is far more costly. Nevertheless, in order to understand Vietnam's present policy toward both its Indochina neighbors, it is crucial to understand the "special relationship" between Vietnam and Laos. But first it is necessary to place the Vietnam–Laos relationship within the context of an Indochina bloc with Vietnam as the dominant power.

Vietnam's Security Concerns in Indochina

The primary concern driving Vietnamese policy toward its Indochinese neighbors is security. Vietnam, somewhat like Israel, is obsessed by its security. It sees itself as surrounded by enemies and believes that it can rely only upon itself for its defense.

Vietnam's chief interest in Laos and Cambodia, therefore, is to assure that these countries do not provide a base for hostile action against Vietnam. Much like Vietnam's major ally, the Soviet Union, in its attitude toward its Eastern European neighbors, the Vietnamese believe that their security interests will be protected only if there are compliant regimes, sensitive to Vietnam's interest, in Vientiane and Phnom Penh.

This view that its security concerns are intertwined with those of Laos and Cambodia has roots in Vietnam's nationalist revolution. In 1950, General Vo Nguyen Giap observed:

> Indochina is a strategic unit: a single theatre of operations. Therefore we have the task of helping to liberate all of Indochina—especially for reasons of strategic geography, we cannot conceive of Vietnam completely independent, while Cambodia and Laos are ruled by imperialism. (Porter, p. 88)

Following the Vietnamese communist seizure of power in Saigon, in April 1975, the Laotian communist leadership moved confidently to consolidate its own power. Thus, Vietnam had a reliable junior partner in Vientiane when the Lao People's Democratic Republic was proclaimed in December 1975. By contrast, Vietnam's obsession about the threat to its security was reinforced by the hostility of the Pol Pot regime, which had marched into Phnom Penh in April 1975. Vietnam's leaders concluded that the provocations against Vietnamese territory were a product of manipulation by its erstwhile ally but historic enemy to the north, China.

The threat from China weighs heavily upon Vietnam's mind. The Vietnamese now see the goodwill from China during the First and Second Indochina Wars, when they received logistic support for their revolutionary effort, as but a temporary respite in their historic struggle with the Chinese. Special circumstances during those wars had produced shared interests between the two revolutionary movements. But even as they shared common objectives during the period from 1945 to 1975, there were strains in the relationship, as both sides now assert. The strains ruptured into open conflict after the communist victories in Indochina.

Well aware that they ran the risk of Chinese retaliation, the Vietnamese felt compelled to invade Cambodia in December 1978 because they perceived the hidden hand of China beneath the Pol Pot provocations. The risk turned to reality when the Chinese riposted with a punitive strike against Vietnam in February 1979, announcing that they had to "teach Vietnam a lesson." Vietnam's current attitude toward the historic threat from China was aptly described to an American scholar by a Vietnamese official:

> In all history, we have been secure from China in only two conditions. One is when China is weak and internally divided. The other is when she has been threatened by barbarians from the north. In the present era, the Russians are our barbarians. (Quoted in Turley, p. 188)

Vietnam's commitment to Indochinese solidarity is given even higher priority than its relationship with the Soviet Union. Vietnam is convinced that the three Indochinese countries are interdependent; their security can be achieved only by the establishment of regimes in Laos and Cambodia on whom Vietnam can rely. In fact, "to safeguard and strengthen the militant alliance and solidarity among the three Indochinese nations" has been elevated by Vietnam to a "law of development." Although the Central Committee acknowledged economic failures at the Sixth Congress of the Vietnamese Communist

Party meeting in Hanoi in November 1986, there was no wavering on this commitment to solidarity.

How the Special Relationship Is Viewed

Historic Roots

The Vietnamese asserted that the liberation of Laos and Cambodia from French colonial rule was, as General Giap expressed it, essential to their own struggle for independence, but their pursuit of this goal was by means of a Vietnamese-dominated Indochinese Communist Party working in each country. During the first decade and a half of its existence, the Vietnamese leaders of the Indochinese Communist Party relied almost exclusively upon Vietnamese residents of Laos to make up the Laotian section of the party. After World War II, they applied more effort to the recruitment of ethnic Lao members. Nevertheless, it was not until 1955, four years after the Indochinese Communist Party had given instructions for the formation of separate parties in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, that twenty-five Laotian members of the Indochinese Communist Party were able to form the Lao People's Party (later renamed the Lao People's Revolutionary Party).

When the Lao People's Revolutionary Party held its Fourth Congress in November 1986, eight of those original twenty-five Indochinese Communist Party members who founded the Laotian party still filled the top positions of the thirteen-member ruling Politburo, attesting to the remarkable continuity and cohesion of the leadership. In rank order, they are:

1. Kaysone Phomvihan
2. Nouhak Phoumasavan
3. Souphanouvong
4. Phoumi Vongvichit
5. Khamtai Siphandon
6. Phoun Sipaseut
7. Sisomphon Lovansai
8. Sisavat Keobounphan

Only Maisouk Saisompheng, a probable ninth former Indochinese Communist Party member, did not sit on the Politburo, although he remained a full member of the sixty-member Central Committee.

These Laotian leaders have had a long and close relationship with their Vietnamese mentors. Most, perhaps all, speak Vietnamese. Some have family ties with the Vietnamese. Kaysone's father was a Vietnamese who had served as secretary to the French Resident in Savannakhet. Nouhak and Souphanouvong have Vietnamese wives. Their world view was shaped by their common struggle with the Vietnamese. Their links have been so strong that today they may not differentiate the Laotian interest from that of the Vietnamese.

During the two decades from the formation of the Laotian party until it took power in Laos, the Vietnamese communists helped to develop the semi-secret Lao People's Revolutionary Party, its political front organization (the Lao Patriotic Front), and the mass organizations that the party coordinates. The Vietnamese helped to recruit and train the Lao People's Liberation Army, providing it advice and logistic support, as well as reinforcement by direct Vietnamese troop commitments. The Vietnamese helped to shape the Laotian ideology and gave training in the formation of a government and an administration.

Thus, the Pathet Lao (or P.L., as the Laotian revolutionary movement was formerly labeled) was nurtured, from its origins, by the Vietnamese. It did not grow out of a mass movement based on peasant discontent and land hunger, as in China and Vietnam. Rather, it took shape as a result of military support and political guidance provided by a more powerful neighboring revolutionary organization. It is not surprising that the Laotian revolutionary organization and the subsequent government that it established were modeled on the Vietnamese communist system.

During its intervention in Laos from 1955 to 1975, Hanoi was pursuing three fundamental objectives: protecting its own borders, gaining access to South Vietnam, and promoting the establishment of a politically congenial regime in Laos. During that wartime period, the North Vietnamese were afraid that their enemies might attempt to manipulate against them the highland minorities of Laos, all of whom were more numerous in adjacent Vietnam.

After 1959, as the war heated up in South Vietnam, Hanoi gave high priority to developing the Ho Chi Minh Trail in the southern panhandle of Laos, the main avenue for the dispatch of personnel and supplies from North to South Vietnam. As they pressed their war effort within South Vietnam during the 1960s and early 1970s, the Vietnamese communists simultaneously worked with the Pathet Lao to expand its political and military control of Laos and to develop its organizational competence. By the time the Paris Agreement of 1973 was signed, the Laotian communists were in a position to claim, successfully, equality of power with the Royal Lao Government. They established a new bipartite coalition government negotiated after the Vientiane Agreement which produced the cease-fire of February 1973.

Shortly after the Vietnamese communists marched into Saigon to complete their quest for power, the Laotian communists were emboldened to press for full power in Vientiane. They engineered provocative political demonstrations against their Vientiane-side coalition partners, who were already paralyzed by the communist victories in Vietnam and Cambodia and by the American departure.

Most of the Vientiane-side ministers and top-level military officers fled across the Mekong River to Thailand, and the Lao People's Revolutionary Party consolidated its power without bloodshed. Non-communist diplomatic missions, although they pared their staffs, remained in Vientiane. On December 2, 1975, the revolutionary party deposed the king and announced the establishment of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

As noted earlier, the accession to power of the Laotian communists could not be described as the culmination of an indigenous peasant revolution founded on widespread popular support. If one were to search for a relevant comparative case, it might be Czechoslovakia in 1948. There, a disciplined communist organization, which had a certain amount of popular appeal, if not a parliamentary majority, seized power almost without violence by a parliamentary maneuver, aided by the threat of outside (Soviet, in the Czech case) armed intervention.*

The Special Relationship from Vietnam's Point of View

In pursuing its special relationship with Laos, Vietnam aims to ensure that the policies, primarily in foreign affairs and defense, of the Lao People's Democratic Republic are consonant with Vietnam's interests. Laotian foreign policy need not be identical with that of Vietnam, as long as it follows its general line. In fact, a measure of latitude for the Laotian government can sometimes be used for the pursuit of Vietnam's objectives. For example, Laos retained friendly relations with Pol Pot's Cambodia, even after the severe tensions between Vietnam and Phnom Penh had been made public. In this case, President Souphanouvong led a delegation to Phnom Penh, apparently on the behalf of Vietnam, as an intermediary in search of a solution to the dispute. As another example, Laos has continued diplomatic relations with the United States, even though U.S.–Vietnamese relations were ruptured with the communist seizure of Saigon in 1975. At times, certain Laotian initiatives toward the U.S. appear to be probes or overtures of Vietnam.

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* See Brown article, *Contemporary Laos*.

Whenever Vietnam embarks on a fundamental policy change, Laos must follow. When Vietnam launched its invasion against the Pol Pot regime, Laos made common cause with its senior partner. Laotian leaders maintained a respectful posture towards China until the Chinese incursion into Vietnam, in March 1979. At that point, the Laotian government denounced China and called for the withdrawal of the Chinese aid mission which was engaged largely in road-building projects in Laos.

As for the guidance of Laotian domestic policies, the Vietnamese communist leaders appear more ambivalent. On the one hand, they are ideological Marxist–Leninists, cultural Confucianists, and professional revolutionaries—all traits which give them a penchant for shaping Laotian society. Notwithstanding the shambles they have made of their own economy, they are inclined to guide the economic policies of their smaller neighbor. On the other hand, the Vietnamese recognize that when they promote measures in the more gentle, complaisant Theravada Buddhist Laotian culture, there will be significant differences in outcome. Vietnamese mentors understand that Laotian institutions and policies, therefore, will be but a pale reflection of those in Vietnam.

The Special Relationship from the Point of View of Laos

The top-level Laotian leaders have worked so long and so intimately with the Vietnamese revolutionaries, albeit as apprentices, that they approach problems in the same manner as their mentors.

Laotian government leaders have reason to be grateful to Vietnam for its critical role in bringing them to power. Moreover, Vietnam has not only brought support on their behalf, but also has helped them to develop central control and cohesion, vital ingredients for a movement attempting to govern a society with important regional, ethnic, tribal, and linguistic cleavages. During their long association with the Vietnamese, Laotian leaders appear to have become psychologically dependent upon their more powerful and persistent senior partners.

Thus, the Laotians see their special relationship with Vietnam as a natural, and probably desirable, outgrowth of their revolutionary history. Moreover, even if the thought of challenging Vietnamese dominance secretly crossed the mind of a Laotian leader, he would quickly conclude there would be little chance for success. It would be more comfortable not to think such thoughts.

A rationale for the relationship between Laos and Vietnam was put to me by Deputy Foreign Minister Souban in an interview in Vientiane in December 1985. He noted that history has thrust the three Indochinese nations into a single bloc:

> Historically, we have commitments to aid our friends in Kampuchea and Vietnam and they have historic commitments to aid us. We consider a threat against Vietnam or Kampuchea a threat to us. We must take part—rightly or wrongly ("à tort ou à raison"). This is dictated by historic engagement.

Responding to the frequent observations by Westerners that Laos has become a dependency of Vietnam, the deputy foreign minister added:

> Westerners can't understand many things that happen in this part of the world, just as we Asians can't understand much about the Occident. You must understand our line of reasoning. Our method of liberation in 1975 was different from that of Vietnam's or Kampuchea's. Our manner of socialism is different from theirs. We are interdependent. There is interdependence everywhere. Economically, the U.S. is also interdependent. We need the help of our brother countries.

The concept of interdependence offers the ruling elite in Laos an explanation that helps them to maintain their self-respect. There is a great sensitivity in Laotian ruling circles to the charge that the Lao People's Democratic Republic is a "puppet" of Vietnam. However, this rhetoric of interdependence does not hide the reality, even from the Laotians themselves, that Vietnam is the dominant partner in the special relationship.

International Perceptions

Unlike its fraternal Kampuchean partner in the Indochina bloc, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has generally been accepted in the international system. Despite the criticism of Vietnamese domination that is expressed in the non-communist world, there has been little challenge to its legality.

Even China, which frequently denounces Vietnam for its intrusion into the internal affairs of Laos, recognizes the Lao People's Democratic Republic as the legitimate government. The Chinese chargé d'affaires in Laos explained to me, during an interview in Vientiane in December 1985, the difference in the Chinese attitude toward Laos and Cambodia. "Kampuchea was occupied by Vietnam. Foreign troops overthrew the legitimate government. Kampuchean troops are now resisting foreign occupation," he said. Thus, China was supporting a "just struggle." By contrast, he noted that the Lao People's Democratic Republic is the legitimate government and China "has always respected it."

The chargé expressed official indignation when he heard that a Laotian government official had told me that China was engaged in subversion in Laos. The chargé noted that 2,000 refugees from Laos had been resettled in Yunan Province, close to the Laotian border and "if relations between our two countries improve," he said, "these refugees could return to Laos, if they wish." But he insisted that China had never supported guerrillas operating against the government of Laos.

Independent observers have given reliable accounts of a camp in China's Yunan Province where Laotian resistance elements had taken refuge and were receiving some desultory assistance from the Chinese. Chinese support to these, or other dissidents, does not appear to be very substantial. Nevertheless, the Chinese are not averse to creating anxiety in the government of Laos and, more important for its Vietnamese allies, making it clear that they have the potential to cause trouble.

Thailand and its partners in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have also accepted the transfer of power in Vientiane to the Laotian communists as an unpleasant fact of life. The Thais were disturbed by the deposition of the Laotian monarchy. They were also uncomfortable about the removal of the long-standing buffer between them and their historic rival, Vietnam, although they do not feel as great a sense of threat from Laos in the north as from Cambodia in the east. Despite their displeasure with developments there, Thailand and the ASEAN nations accept the current political arrangement in Laos—unlike that of Cambodia—as a *fait accompli* and they all maintain diplomatic relations with the government of Laos.

Thailand does provide sanctuary for anti-government resistants from Laos, who also draw limited amounts of support from the Thai military. Most of the Thai assistance comes from local military commanders who want intelligence from Laos and who judge it useful to harass the Laotian communists and their Vietnamese mentors. Both lowland Lao and Hmong dissident bands, operating separately, find recruits among the restless young men in the refugee camps in Thailand.

The Royal Thai government, like the People's Republic of China, officially denies that it supports insurgency in Laos. In fact, Thai officials resumed negotiations with Laotian authorities in 1986 aimed at reducing tensions between the two countries, and both promised renewed efforts to make the Mekong a "river of peace," as the prime ministers of both countries had agreed to do in 1979. But Thai military authorities still seem inclined to offer low-level assistance to selected resistance elements.

Even with this limited Thai and Chinese encouragement, the resistance constitutes a minimal threat to the government. It imposes costs, raises tensions, and sustains suspicion among the Laotian leadership of the malevolent intentions of its external enemies, but it does not threaten the continuity or stability of the regime. In the unlikely event that the insurgents were to increase their strength significantly, the result would probably be a larger Vietnamese military presence in Laos, the opposite of what the Laotian insurgents would want to accomplish.

The United States continued its diplomatic relations with Laos after the transfer of power to the communists in 1975. The U.S. mission has been reduced to nine Foreign Service officers, the maximum permitted by the Laotian government, symbolic of the decline in American influence from the pre-1975 years when the number of its official representatives reached 2,000. The United States has been critical of the Vietnamese military presence in Laos but, unlike its posture toward the regime in Phnom Penh, it accepts the legality of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

In summary, in contrast with the situation in Cambodia, there is neither a credible threat to the government of Laos from within the country, nor is there significant opposition to it in the international arena. International acceptance of the Laotian regime means that its relationship with Vietnam is not challenged. The Vietnamese must find this feature of the Laotian model especially attractive, in view of the high costs in international sanctions that Vietnam pays for its role in Cambodia.

Managing the Special Relationship

The Legal Basis: The Twenty-Five-Year Friendship Treaty

The legal basis for the special relationship between Laos and Vietnam was formalized with the signing, on July 18, 1977, of a twenty-five-year friendship treaty.* The treaty consists of seven brief articles, which describe mutual obligations in broad language, and includes three protocols dealing with defense, border delineation, and Vietnamese economic assistance, which remain secret to this day. Article 1 captures the spirit of the agreement in the following terms:

> The two sides undertake to do their best to defend and develop the Laos–Vietnam special relationship, to constantly strengthen solidarity and mutual trust, long-term cooperation and mutual assistance in all fields in a spirit of proletarian internationalism. . . .

Article 2 lays the basis for cooperation in defense, calling for

> . . . the two sides pledge themselves to wholeheartedly support and assist each other and carry out a close cooperation aimed at reinforcing the defence capacity, preserving independence, sov-

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* The text of the treaty may be found in the Appendix.

> ereignty and territorial integrity, and defending the people's peaceful labour, against all schemes and acts of sabotage by imperialism and foreign reactionary forces.

This provision, in the view of the two concerned governments, provided legal legitimation to the presence of Vietnamese troops in Laos. Throughout the revolutionary period in Laos, the Vietnamese had committed a significant number of troops, both in support of the Pathet Lao as well as in support of their own war objectives in South Vietnam. This troop commitment was, however, not publicly acknowledged. With the signing of the treaty, spokesmen for both countries have referred to their mutual treaty obligations to justify the contemporary assignment of Vietnamese troops to Laos.

A former U.S. ambassador to Laos, William H. Sullivan, who was a member of the U.S. delegation to the Paris conference, has challenged the legality of the Vietnamese troop commitment to Laos, asserting that it is a violation of the Paris Agreement of January 27, 1973, signed by Vietnam and the United States. Article 20 of the Paris Agreement states:

> Foreign countries shall put an end to all military activities in Cambodia and Laos, totally withdraw from and refrain from reintroducing into these two countries troops, military advisers and military personnel, armaments, munitions, and war materiel.

Although Ambassador Sullivan, testifying as a private citizen before a congressional committee, charged that the Vietnamese troop presence in Laos is just as much a violation of Article 20 of the Paris Agreement as their military presence in Cambodia, this is not an issue which has been pressed by the U.S. government. Vietnam and Laos reject such charges, asserting that the 1977 Treaty of Friendship gives Laos the right to call upon military assistance from its ally (U.S. Congress, H.R., Hearings, 1981, pp. 83–89).

Article 3 of the treaty between Laos and Vietnam provides the basis for economic cooperation. Under this provision, Vietnam has engaged in a diversified program of economic assistance to Laos, and has created a variety of interbureaucratic instruments for cooperation between the two governments. Article 4 states that "the Laos–Vietnam borders will be frontiers of lasting brotherly friendship." It alludes to another treaty, signed the same day as the Treaty of Friendship but which remains secret. This treaty presumably established guidelines for rectification and delimitation of the border. *Ky Son,* a Vietnamese publication, noted in 1980 that a joint border commission from both countries

> ... conducted a series of investigations and surveys to delimit the national borders, planted border markers, discussed the setting up of border posts and laid down principles for the operation of border crossing points. (Quoted in Stuart-Fox, *Laos,* p. 176)

Martin Stuart-Fox writes that the border negotiations between Laos and Vietnam were "hard-fought and at times heated." Laotian negotiators resisted Vietnamese demands that the borders be "rectified." He cites reports that the negotiators shouted at each other, and at one point the Laotian delegation broke off negotiations. He notes unconfirmed reports that Laotian troops fired on a Vietnamese team moving border markers. The two parties signed a border agreement on February 24, 1986, but its contents have not been published. Vietnam is reported to have gained some territory southeast of Sam Neua and sections of the old Ho Chi Minh Trail, while the Laotians were compensated with territory in Sekong Province. Until the border can be publicly examined, a suspicion will remain that the Vietnamese emerged from the negotiation in a more favorable position than the Laotians (Stuart-Fox, *Laos,* pp. 176–177).

Article 5, concerned with foreign policy, provides that the two sides "fully support each other's independent international policies." This provision offers legal support to the political reality that Laos must follow Vietnam's foreign policy. (Article 6 calls for regular exchanges of news on matters dealt with in the treaty and Article 7 specifies how ratification will be effected.)

Party-to-Party Interaction

Probably the most important of the numerous channels through which the Vietnamese transmit influence to Laos is the party channel, both formal and informal. The Office of the Secretariat of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, directed by General Secretary Kaysone, conducts the formal party-to-party relations. On the Vietnamese side, there is an organization referred to as CP-38, or the Working Committee of the West, which in 1981 had 140 Vietnamese cadres and reported to Vice Premier Vo Nguyen Giap, the highest

Vietnamese authority responsible for Laos at the time.* CP-38 presumably interacts with the Secretariat of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party. The informal contacts between the top party leaders in Laos and Vietnamese party officials may be equally important.

As noted earlier, the eight highest leaders of the Politburo in Laos were Indochinese Communist Party members, with a long experience of professional and social contact with the Vietnamese. Many others, including members of the Central Committee of the party, served in the nationalist struggle with the Vietnamese, followed political training in Vietnam, and had frequent contact with Vietnamese advisers. This long experience must ease the social interchange with the Vietnamese. Laotian party cadres were encouraged to fraternize with the Vietnamese assigned to Laos by Central Committee Resolution 33, promulgated sometime in the mid-1980s and still secret.

This resolution admonished Laotian party members to avoid excessive contacts with other foreigners, including members from the socialist bloc countries, except for what was required in pursuit of their duties. This restriction reflects the suspicion that party leaders have about foreigners. The special position reserved for the Vietnamese is justified by the assertion that the Vietnamese best understand conditions in Laos and, most important, by the need for genuine solidarity within the Indochina bloc.

In addition to the interaction between Laotian party members and official Vietnamese within Laos, there is a frequent pattern of travel which takes Laotian party leaders, particularly Kaysone, regularly to Hanoi and brings Vietnamese personalities on visits to Vientiane. At the 1986 party congresses in both countries, there was an exchange of delegations with important party leaders in attendance.

Still another form of Vietnamese influence on the Lao People's Revolutionary Party is the impact of the official doctrine of the Vietnamese Communist Party. As a result of its long experience with the Vietnamese, the training of its members in Vietnam, and through the intermediary of Vietnamese advisers, the Lao People's Revolutionary Party has embraced the Vietnamese brand of Marxism-Leninism. Laotian party doctrine holds, in terms used equally by the Vietnamese party, that Laos has completed its national democratic revolution by winning a "people's war" with a worker–peasant alliance under the secret leadership of the party working through a national front. In its march to socialism—the next stage—the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, like the Vietnamese Communist Party, will implement "three revolutions:" a production revolution, a scientific and technical revolution, and an ideological and cultural revolution.

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* This Vietnamese structure in Laos was revealed by Khamsengkeo Sensethith, former bureau director of the LPDR Ministry of Health and former Secretary-General of the Lao committee of the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization, who defected to China in November 1981. See Chanda, p. 44.

The Lao People's Revolutionary Party has adopted the Vietnamese concept of "people's mastery" that lays out, if in vague language, the duties and rights of the people. The party must provide the motive force for change; the government must implement party directives; and the front must mobilize people in organizations of workers, peasants, youth, and women. This dictum, in the form a party-state-people trinity, epitomizes the political strategy for constructing socialism: the party must lead, the state must manage, the people are masters.

Military-to-Military Interaction

A second important channel through which the Vietnamese exercise influence and control is the military. In 1979 and early 1980, Western diplomatic sources estimated Vietnamese troops in Laos to be 40,000, while the Lao People's Liberation Army was estimated at 20,000. By the end of 1980, following the Thai closure of the Laotian border, a presumed increase of Chinese support to insurgents in Laos, and an augmented Vietnamese road-building program, Vietnamese troop presence was thought to have risen to 50,000 to 60,000. In February 1987, 50,000 was estimated as the probable troop strength.

It is interesting that the Vietnamese troop commitment is so relatively high in Laos, a country of some 3.5 million inhabitants with a low level of insurgency, while Cambodia, with more than 7 million people and a much larger insurgent threat, was estimated in February 1987 to have only 140,000 Vietnamese troops. The reason for the size of the Vietnamese troop presence in Laos lies in the three-fold function of the troops: 1) to provide protection to Vietnam against the threat of Chinese invasion; 2) to engage in engineering and construction tasks; and (3) to assist the Laotian army in providing security in Laos.

An estimated 15,000 Vietnamese troops, deployed in five regiments, are assigned to the northeast sector of Laos in what is called Front 317. These troops are meant to be a deterrent to the Chinese, who have warned of administering a "second lesson" which might conceivably strike at Vietnam through northeast Laos. Another segment of the Vietnamese troop presence, estimated at 15,000 to 20,000, including at least three divisions, is engaged in building and maintaining roads, bridges, and airfields and performing other engineering tasks. They are deployed particularly in the northern and eastern regions adjacent to Vietnam, working on improving the road network that ties Laos to Vietnam. A substantial contingent, whose efforts are devoted primarily to construction, are stationed in barracks in the region of the Plain of Jars.

The troops deployed for security purposes are stationed in areas thought to be sensitive. One contingent is located in Luang Prabang Province, the seat of the former royal capital. In early 1977, there was dissident activity in that region and rumors that the dissidents were attempting to involve in a coup d'état the deposed king and crown prince, who were restricted to their modest palace in Luang Prabang. Vietnamese troops helped to deal with the dissidence there and now remain as a deterrent to any hostile political activity, which Vietnam suspects might be incited by Chinese manipulation.

There is another garrison of Vietnamese troops designed to protect the current capital, Vientiane. Vietnamese officials have remarked to visitors that there is still a "nest of reactionaries" in Vientiane. In Vietnam's perspective, their troops serve to deter any notion of an uprising in the capital which might attract support from Thailand, just across the Mekong River. There may be one Vietnamese division in Savannakhet Province, in the south, helping the Lao People's Revolutionary Army to deal with resistance elements who infiltrate into Laos from sanctuary in Thailand.

In addition to direct troop commitments, the Vietnamese assign a network of advisers to Laotian army units, down to the battalion level and even below in some specialized units. The Vietnamese provide communication and logistic support to the Laotian army. They send high-level Laotian military officers to Vietnam for training and appoint Vietnamese training staff to help the Laotian army with military, and perhaps more important, political instruction. Vietnamese cadres influence the appointment and promotion of Laotian officers. The Vietnamese appear to operate in all military units of the Laotian army except for the small Laotian air force, which benefits from assistance by a Soviet technical and advisory staff. This pervasive Vietnamese military presence provides the visible symbol—if ever one were needed—of where ultimate power lies.

Government-to-Government Interaction

Under the rubric of government assistance, there is a sizeable Vietnamese economic assistance program and a large civilian advisory staff in Laos. In 1980, the Vietnamese publication *Ky Son* offered a glimpse of the complex of activities undertaken by Vietnam for Laos. It noted that Vietnam has assisted Laos

> . . . in the fields of agriculture and forestry in particular, focusing on a survey of Laos's agricultural, forestry, and stockbreeding potentials. Vietnam has helped Laos conduct basic surveys, then build a series of production and experimental establishments such as plant and animal nurseries, State farms, afforestation centres and logging camps, roads for the transportation of timber and forestry products, sawmills, turpentine and shellac extraction factories and factories manufacturing such production means as farm implements, fertilizers, insecticides, and animal feed. Vietnam also helped in the survey and construction of small- and medium-sized hydraulic, irrigation, and hydro-electric projects. . . .
>
> In industry, Vietnam supplies to Laos raw materials, fuel, and equipment to expand and build a number of industrial establishments to produce tools, cement, and building materials, engineering factories for the postal and communications and transport services, a number of consumer goods factories as well as some mining enterprises, tin, and gypsum.
>
> Vietnam is also helping in the repair and upgrading of old roads and in the building of new roads and bridges, in improving the navigability of . . . rivers, the building of ferries, and vehicle repair shops. A major joint project is being undertaken by Vietnam and Laos: to build roads from Laos to the Vietnamese ports of Vinh-Ben Thuy and Da Nang across the Truong Son Range [the Annamite Cordillera].

> Vietnam's assistance and cooperation in the domain of culture and education has helped Laos shoot a number of documentary films, provide vocational training for Laos's art troupes, and build the first material and technical bases for cultural and artistic work including a film studio and expand information and exhibition work [sic]. Many Lao students have been sent to study in Vietnam. Vietnamese cadres have also helped Laos carry out an educational reform, improve school curricula, compile text books, and open vocational schools and a teacher's college. (Quoted in Stuart-Fox, *Laos*, pp. 175–176)

Vietnam does not make available to international organizations figures showing the total of its economic assistance to Laos, as other foreign donors do, and those figures seldom appear anywhere in the public domain. However, an official government statement, previewing the tenth anniversary of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, issued in October 1985, noted that Vietnamese aid from 1975 to 1985 was $133.4 million, financing approximately 200 economic projects ("Memoir on LPDR Ties," p. I-3).

An advisory staff is an important adjunct to the Vietnamese economic assistance program. Vietnam assigns to Laos an estimated 6,000 advisers, who offer both political and technical counsel to the prime minister's office and to each of the ministries. Party and government training schools have a complement of Vietnamese advisers who guide curricula for political instruction, provide documents which are translated from Vietnamese to Lao, and sometimes directly conduct training sessions. Most senior government and party officials must undergo political training in Vietnam for six months to a year. For example, from April to November 1985, Minister of Education Bounthiem Phitsamay and Deputy Foreign Minister Souban were assigned to a political instruction course in Hanoi (McBeth, pp. 27–28). Without such training, it is widely assumed, careers will suffer.*

Most advisers pay regular visits to the ministry they advise while operating from their own headquarters at Kilometer 6 (former residence area of the Americans, from the mid-1960s until 1975), where the higher level advisers reside and work, or from other offices in Vientiane. Although some Vietnamese advisers are regarded primarily as giving technical advice, the more important role of the advisory staff is seen as political guidance: they help prepare political training for youth, see that government directives are executed, and participate in the formulation of political training of ministry employees. They take part in organizing curricula for the schools, especially for the social science program at the teacher's college level.

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* See Stuart-Fox, *Asian Pacific Community*, p. 79.

Some Vietnamese advisers speak Lao or French, but many need Laotian interpreters or have Laotian counterparts who speak Vietnamese. No special efforts are made to disguise the presence of the Vietnamese advisers, although they operate in a discreet and unobtrusive manner.

Much of the Vietnamese economic assistance to Laos is negotiated through the Vietnam–Laos Cooperation Commission, which plans the activities of the myriad of delegations that are exchanged to implement the programs. Systematic contacts are being developed by cadres throughout the Vietnamese government with their counterparts in Laos. While visiting Laos and Vietnam in December 1985, I encountered my Hanoi host, the deputy director of the Institute of International Relations, on a regular visit to his counterpart institution lodged in the headquarters of the Laos People's Revolutionary Party in Vientiane.

The director of the Committee for Cultural and Economic Relations with Laos and Kampuchea told me, in an interview in Hanoi in 1985, that when an aid agreement has been signed, the relevant ministries of both countries cooperate to carry out the program. For example, if road improvement in Laos is called for, the Ministries of Transport and Communication of Vietnam and Laos will cooperate in the execution of the program. The Lao-speaking director, who had served with the Laotian resistance from 1968 to 1975 in Khamouane Province and stayed on as an adviser in Vientiane until 1982, noted that Vietnam

> has helped to build offices and schools, and other public buildings. In some provinces we have helped down to the district level. In industry, we help them to restore and to build new factories. In agriculture, we provide them with technical personnel, advanced varieties of rice, and planning cadres. With this help, in recent years they have been able to provide enough food to feed themselves.

Vietnam's imprint on Laos through the training and education it gives to Laotians is growing in significance. The Laotian minister of education told me that 11,000 students had been sent abroad to study since 1975, largely to socialist countries that provided financing for them, and more than 5,000 had returned by the end of 1985. The largest number are trained in the Soviet Union, with Vietnam ranking second.

Vietnam has inspired a variety of Indochina-wide institutions designed to reinforce relations among the three countries and provide additional levers for Vietnamese influence and control. For example, every six months the foreign ministers of the three countries meet, rotating their meeting site among the capitals of the member countries.

In recent years, another device aimed at promoting goodwill between Vietnam and Laos has been a "people-to-people" interchange. One mechanism in this campaign has been the creation of "sister province" relationships, providing for mutual assistance and ceremonial exchange between citizens of sister provinces in the two countries. In a talk with officials at Vinh, in Nghe Tinh Province (where Ho Chi Minh was born), I learned that the sister province in Laos had sent a delegation expressing sympathy about the typhoon damage suffered by the Vietnamese sister province in 1985 and offering symbolic assistance.

Added to these efforts at political integration are Hanoi's efforts to promote Indochina-wide economic integration. For this task, Vietnam can draw upon the French colonial legacy, which linked three disparate countries into the single colonial entity of Indochina. Most important for Laos is the colonial route system that joins it to seaports in Vietnam. The Laotian government, with Vietnamese as well as Soviet bloc assistance, has given the highest economic priority to refurbishing these roads, which are badly eroded. Vietnam is also assisting in the construction of an oil pipeline that will join the interior of Laos with the Vietnamese seacoast.

Even though Laos is more naturally oriented by geography and culture towards Thailand, the policies of the Thai government have, ironically, given impetus to the Laotian process of economic integration with Vietnam. The Thais have intermittently closed their border to Laos, as tensions between the two countries have surfaced, denying Laos access to Thai ports and inhibiting the flow of commerce. The

Thai stranglehold has given urgency to the Laotian search for a secure access to the sea via Vietnam. In this manner, the political and economic pull exerted by Hanoi to bring Laos closer to Vietnam has been reinforced by the push from Thailand.

Assessment of the Special Relationship

Constraints upon the Influence of Vietnam

The Vietnamese face significant constraints upon their efforts to draw Laos closer into the Vietnamese orbit. It is difficult for Vietnamese Confucians to make good Marxists-Leninists of the more gentle, other-worldly Laotian Theravada Buddhists. Laotians seldom express open hostility or even mild objection to the admonitions of zealous Vietnamese cadres. Despite the appearance of assent, Laotians have a tendency to set their own agenda and move at their own pace. If pressure for conformity to Vietnamese-inspired, Marxist–Leninist standards were to grow too heavy, there would remain the escape hatch across the Mekong River to Thailand.

Even though Thailand has adopted policies to deter flight from Laos and the attraction of refugee status has greatly declined since 1980, it seems likely that the refugee flow would increase substantially if large numbers of Laotians judged that life in Laos had become intolerable. Therefore, Laotian communist leaders and their Vietnamese mentors must slow down the pace of creating a socialist society and a new socialist man.

A corollary restraint is the natural affinity of the lowland Laotians with Thailand rather than Vietnam. Laotians and Thais speak a language understood by the other, and they share a common religion. Wet rice cultivation in both countries, under similar conditions, means that they follow similar seasonal rhythms and have a common style of life. This cultural orientation of Laos toward Thailand imposes important restraints upon Vietnam's effort to draw its junior partner into the new Indochina orbit.

Laos also has a more natural economic affinity toward its southern neighbor than toward Vietnam. Even after Bangkok officially closed the border a number of times, following a military or political altercation with Vientiane, an irrepressible border commerce has continued.

Thailand is the purchaser of electricity produced by the Nam Ngum Dam—Laos's major source of foreign currency. When there is a surplus of rice, fruit, and vegetables in fertile regions of the Mekong River valley on the Laotian side, they find their way easily to Thailand, not Vietnam. Thailand has the possibility of increasing the commercial interchange with Laos, even while the government of Laos remains under the political hegemony of Vietnam.

Vietnamese leaders appear to accept with equanimity these constraints upon their efforts to bring Laos into closer affinity with Vietnam. The chief Vietnamese concern has been to insure that the government of Laos takes no actions that might endanger the interests of Vietnam. Because Laos has not diverged in its foreign or security policies from the Vietnamese line, Vietnam can afford to be indulgent about the non-conformity of Laos in matters of domestic development. Vietnamese leaders seem confident that history is with them. The refurbished road system, the new flow of commerce in Vietnam's direction, the emerging institutions of Indochina, the technical and political training of young Laotians will combine to give Vietnam an increasing role in shaping the destiny of Laos. While Laotians may not be zealous members of the new Indochina bloc, the Lao People's Democratic Republic is reliable from the Vietnamese point of view.

Consequences of the Special Relationship for Laos

The special relationship between the victorious Vietnamese revolutionaries and their Laotian apprentices emerged out of an historical process, and Vietnam's political dominance is likely to endure, at least in the near future, despite the cultural and economic constraints on Hanoi's ability to draw Laos more fully into its orbit. The Vietnamese leaders have reason for satisfaction with the Laotian model, as this account has shown, and their Laotian counterparts owe gratitude to their sponsors for helping them achieve power. However, for the Lao People's Democratic Republic regime and the society it is attempting to shape, this relationship has serious consequences.

The government of Laos enjoys little popular support, although most Laotians simply incline to its authority since they have little alternative. The government's dependence upon Vietnam, historically distrusted by Laotians, erodes its legitimacy. Its heavy-handed socialist measures in the early years of its rule, derived from the

Vietnamese model, along with its ineptitude in managing the economy, provoked serious distrust, even among those who had been politically neutral.

One measure of popular attitudes toward the government and its relationship with the Vietnamese, might be drawn from the number who have fled. More than 350,000—roughly ten percent of the total population—have crossed the Mekong River to refuge in Thailand since 1975. Those who remain passively accept the realities of power. There is historical precedent for such a reaction: the Laotians have had powerful outsiders exerting dominant influence in their land for centuries. They are a gentle, compliant people who have learned to adjust to strong patrons when their choice is limited.

Popular reaction ranges on a scale from pervasive passive reaction to some signs of severe displeasure, a subject on which it is difficult to gather accurate information. Laotians cannot express negative opinions without running a serious risk. Even long-term foreign residents have little access to reliable data on Laotian opinion. International agency administrators and voluntary agency personnel who travel in the countryside are invariably accompanied by Laotian government authorities. Relationships with these authorities are normally good—Laotians are amiable companions, and they are helpful in facilitating the work of their guests. But the foreigners have little direct, frank interchange with the population. Peasants seldom convey any critical views on politically sensitive issues to foreigners accompanied by government cadres.

Laotian refugees within camps in Thailand, not surprisingly, claim that Vietnamese domination is despised and the Vietnamese presence resented by the people. They often refer to the Laotians' historic suspicion of the more powerful Vietnamese and say that the current Vietnamese domination is part of the age-old Vietnamese ambition to "swallow" Laos. Former bureaucrats, even if they acknowledge that Vietnamese advisers may have been discreet in offering counsel, generally express resentment that the Vietnamese have such an influential role in guiding the destiny of Laos.

Organized exile groups are more vituperative in their denunciations. Outhong Souvannavuong, the president of the United Lao National Liberation Front, in a July 11, 1986, letter to the Secretary General of the United Nations, charged that

> North Vietnam has stationed 60,000 troops in Laos to force the Laotian people into total submission, to push them into exodus from their homeland, and to apportion land for its own needy settlers.

Former General Vang Pao, in a speech to the Heritage Foundation in Washington, D.C., in February 1987, charged that Hanoi had

> . . . separated Laotian men from women, husbands from wives, old from young and sent them to different reeducation camps. Laotian women were taken away from their loved ones for the purpose of human reproduction with North Vietnamese men so that the new generation in Laos will be purely Vietnamese citizens. . . . The Hanoi regime has also activated a second stage of the Vietnamization program by bringing more than 300,000 Vietnamese citizens to settle in the resource-rich areas of Laos.

Most independent observers, as well as diplomats posted in Laos, have not found credible evidence to support these angry accusations of the colonization of Laos with Vietnamese settlers.

As for the Laotian reaction to Vietnamese advisers, the reality may be more complex than the testimony one hears in the refugee camps. An astute expatriate social scientist in Laos told me that Laotian attitudes are highly dependent upon the expertise of the adviser. If he is technically competent, he is appreciated—if he is incompetent, he is resented. Some Vietnamese experts are very good, she noted. Villagers generally appreciate an effective Vietnamese adviser more than an inept Laotian government official. Some of the younger Vietnamese, especially those who come under sister province arrangements— many of whom have few skills—are thought to be arrogant. Nevertheless, some benefits do result from the twin province arrangements. For example, she observed that some looms had been sent to a small weaving cooperative from similar cooperatives in the Vietnamese sister province, along with some skilled trainers. Other foreign officials confirmed the view that many Vietnamese experts are especially effective, familiar with the Laotian socio-political environment—unlike many foreign aid personnel— and many are genuinely dedicated to the development of Laos. And, like other expatriate colleagues, Vietnamese experts are heard to express frustration at the leisurely work pace of the Laotians.

For each presumed benefit derived by the Lao People's Democratic Republic through its special relationship with Vietnam, it is possible to point to a corresponding liability. Hanoi invests sizeable resources aimed at providing security for Laos against both internal and external enemies. On the other hand, the political alignment of Laos with Vietnam helps to create these enemies. Most formidable as an enemy is China, with whom it would surely be in Laos's interest to maintain friendly relations. Little Laos represents no inherent threat to China, and but for its intimate involvement with China's enemy, Vietnam, Laotian prospects for amicable relations with its massive northern neighbor would be good. There is a stronger argument that the Vietnamese shield is a deterrent to encroachment on Laos by Thailand, which, like Vietnam, has expanded into Laotian territory over the centuries. But the intimate involvement of Laos with Vietnam provokes the Thais to regard Laos as potentially hostile territory, a possible springboard for their historic Vietnamese rival to threaten Thai interests.

The association of Laos with Hanoi brings substantial economic assistance not only from Vietnam but also from the larger socialist bloc of which it is a part. Clearly, there are substantial resources pouring into the Laotian development effort, arguably up to the limit that Laos can absorb. On the other hand, Laos is deprived by its political orientation of alternative sources of assistance which might be more appropriate to its development needs. Vietnam's own dismal record of economic development does not qualify it well as a mentor for the modernization of Laos, and Soviet bloc assistance carries other burdens with its contribution.

Vietnam has helped Laos construct a system that aims at developing a coherent national identity based on equality for the diverse peoples within its society. Vietnamese power has helped the leaders of Laos to strengthen their state and shape their ideology to integrate the heterogeneous members of their country. But, it can be argued, the system imposed with Vietnamese influence is inappropriate to Laotian traditions and temperament. Instead of fostering unity, it creates tension and dissension. Many have expressed their disgust with the system by fleeing; most who remain accept it with resignation.

The costs and benefits of the special relationship with Vietnam for the Lao People's Democratic Republic, summarized in the foregoing arguments, might be said to reflect the contradictions between the interests of the current Laotian elite and the Laotian public.

Nevertheless, the forces of history have shaped this special relationship, and it is likely to persist, at least in the near future.

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Vietnam and Cambodia: Domination and Security

Nayan Chanda

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> In principle it is not at all our intention to take possession of this country. We wish, following heaven's example, to leave these men to live and exist in peace. We do not wish the loss of this little kingdom, as is planned by other persons with hearts full of malice. The Cambodians are savages whose nature is evil and vicious. As often as they submit, so often do they rebel, but constantly they forget the rule and the law.
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> *Vietnamese mandarin Phan Than Gian**

A document adopted by the Fourth Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam in December 1976 placed among its foreign policy goals the building of a "special relationship" with Laos and Cambodia. A decade later—after an invasion and two friendship treaties—that goal seems largely to have been accomplished in the form of a Hanoi-dominated Indochinese bloc. The Sixth Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam, held in December 1986, has set out to make the preservation of this achievement an immutable "law." As the party resolution put it, developing and consolidating the special relationship between the three Indochinese countries "constitute a law governing the survival and development of all three fraternal nations." While Vietnam has announced its desire for military withdrawal from Cambodia and a negotiated political settlement for peace in that country, there has been no suggestion that Hanoi is willing to bend the newly proclaimed "law" of Indochinese unity to end the Cambodian conflict. Whatever the final outcome of the conflict, Vietnamese security interests in Cambodia seem to be non-negotiable.

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* As quoted by Milton Osborne in *Asia*, May–June 1979, p. 16.

This paper seeks to analyze the roots of Vietnam's policy of a "special relationship" with Cambodia, to describe the Khmer responses to Vietnam's attempt at domination, to assess the developments since Hanoi's 1979 invasion of Cambodia, and to sketch out the broad trends in Vietnam's relations with Cambodia.

Historical Roots

It is important to learn something about Vietnam's history and culture and to try to understand its recent concerns. At the same time one has to be on guard against the doctored historiography that has been offered by the Khmer Rouge and the Vietnamese in justification for their actions. The *Black Paper* ("*Livre Noir*"), published by the Pol Pot regime months before its fall, claimed that history showed the Vietnamese by nature to be "aggressor, expansionist and swallower of other countries' territories" and conflict with Vietnam was hence a historic inevitability. In contrast, the Vietnamese version of history, in works published since the 1979 invasion, maintains that for centuries Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia have cooperated with each other against their predatory neighbors— China and Thailand. The special relationship among the three is thus historically ordained.

History indeed has played a significant role in shaping the present relationship but not in the fashion the protagonists have claimed. By the seventeenth century Vietnam and Thailand had emerged as the main rivals contending for power in mainland Southeast Asia. While Thailand considered the control of the Mekong basin vital for its security, the Vietnamese, living under the shadow of China, came to view Cambodia and Laos as crucial strategic space for the security of their narrow strip of land. In 1835 Nguyen Tri Phuong, a mandarin in the court of Hue justified repeated Vietnamese interventions in Cambodia in the following terms:

> Vietnam is in a position that is extremely dangerous. It is stuck to a large country that has a population several dozen times as large, has a warlike spirit and is forever wanting to expand to the adjoining country they consider barbarian—that is China. To the west and south it joins with races who also are expansionist and intrude on our territory. . . . They [Vietnamese] must always oppose the aggression of the people and tribes in order to preserve themselves and progress. . . . Cambodia is weak and always afflicted by internal rebellion and aggression from the Siamese army which terrorise the masses. Because of this many times they [Khmers] requested our forces to come and restore security and order for their country. (Dao Vang Vy)

A cultural underpinning of Vietnam's strategic view was the pretension of sinicised mandarins of the court of Hue that theirs was a mini-middle kingdom. As Alexander Woodside points out, belief that "they were the cultural cynosures of a society surrounded by subversive 'barbarians'" led the Vietnamese not only to seek control over Cambodia but also to undertake a "civilizing mission" as well (p. 253). Vietnamese party leaders today do not claim any such lofty objectives but nevertheless in private conversations many take a patronizing attitude calling the Khmers "children." As the more experienced of the three countries in fighting liberation wars and building socialism, the Vietnamese assume a "natural" leadership role.

Ironically, while the imposition of French rule saved Cambodia from being carved up by its neighbors, at the same time it helped to reinforce the Vietnamese concept of the strategic unity of Indochina and highlighted the importance of Cambodia for the security of Vietnam. It was not a simple case of the Vietnamese party seeking to inherit the mantle of Indochina from the French and adapting it to the Nguyen dynasty strategic doctrine. The idea of an Indochinese Communist party was imposed in 1930 by the Comintern on reluctant Vietnamese communists who had a low opinion of the revolutionary potential in Laos and Cambodia. Despite Comintern prodding the Vietnamese had done very little to mobilize the "Indochinese proletariat" against the common colonial enemy. It was the French attacks on the Vietminh from bases in Laos and Cambodia in 1947 that awakened—or reawakened— the Vietnamese to the unity of Indochina (Turley, p. 183).

> In 1950, as the Vietminh began preparation for their counteroffensive against the French, Vo Nguyen Giap wrote: Indochina is a single strategic unit, a single battlefield. For this reason, and especially because of the strategic terrain, we cannot consider Vietnam to be independent so long as Cambodia and Laos are under imperialist domination, just as we cannot consider Cambodia and Laos to be independent so long as Vietnam is under imperialist rule. The colonialists used Cambodia to attack Vietnam. Laos and Cambodia temporarily have become the secure rear areas of the enemy and simultaneously their most vulnerable area in the entire Indochina theatre. Therefore, we need to open the Lao–Cambodia battlefield resolutely and energetically. (Turley, p. 184)

The value of an Indochinese theater was proven by the Vietminh success against the French and further confirmed by the experience of the Second Indochina War. Vietnamese bases in and transit routes through Laos and Cambodia proved critical in winning the war. In the summer of 1975 Laos "fell" peacefully into communist hands as the Cambodian and Vietnamese victory in April dramatically altered the Indochinese balance—proving the validity of Giap's thesis.

With the war over, the Vietnamese began looking at Indochina not only as a unified theatre for the country's defense but also a natural space for economic cooperation and resource-sharing between the three countries striving toward the common objective of building socialism. For example, in a cryptic reference to planning on an Indochinese scale, a senior Vietnamese planning official, Che Viet Tan, wrote in 1979, "In a firm strategic position in which Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia are interdependent it is necessary to combine the disposition of strategic regions with economic regions and to regulate and distribute the work force and the population for building grain production bases, industrial zones, infrastructures . . . " (p. 21). At the Fourth Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam in 1976 the "special relationship" with Laos and Cambodia involving "long-term cooperation and mutual assistance in all fields" was adopted as a principal foreign policy goal for the new period. The economic objectives, however, soon gave way to urgent security concerns. Cambodia was seen as taking a radically different path of development that excluded economic cooperation, but, more serious, was posing a military challenge.

Discussing the possible reasons for the apparently insane Khmer Rouge attacks on Vietnam is beyond the scope of this paper. It is, however, obvious that in the Indochinese dialectic the Vietnamese drive for a "special relationship" with Cambodia further fuelled the Khmer paranoia and aggressive behavior, which in turn convinced Hanoi that it was vital to bring Cambodia into a dependent security relationship. In any case, from late 1976 to early 1977, the Khmer Rouge eliminated hundreds of Cambodian communists suspected of friendly feeling toward the Vietnamese, and in April 1977 the Khmer Rouge began launching large-scale raids into Vietnamese territory killing hundreds of civilians and destroying villages. In October the Vietnamese Army mounted its first large-scale retaliatory attack. With Pol Pot making his first official visit to Peking in October to ask for help and a Soviet military delegation touring Vietnam to assess Vietnamese needs, the conflict started acquiring new international dimensions.* Also in October a Chinese military delegation secretly arrived in Phnom Penh to sign a protocol for the delivery of military supplies—from walkie-talkies to long-range guns, patrol boats, and jet fighters. In December Chinese Vice Premier and Politburo member Chen Yonggui made a publicized trip to Cambodia to tour the border regions. The following month Peking unveiled a new policy towards the overseas Chinese that made Vietnam greatly suspicious about Peking's role vis-a-vis ethnic Chinese in Vietnam. The military buildup in Cambodia, supported by stepped-up Chinese aid, and Peking's increasingly open hostility to Hanoi helped to conjure up the historic Vietnamese fear of being caught in a nutcracker. In retrospect this fear may seem exaggerated and even self-serving, but in 1978 it was real. In mid-February 1978 the Vietnamese Politburo met secretly in Ho Chi Minh City to take the momentous decision to intervene militarily to install a friendly regime in Cambodia. How seriously the Vietnamese took the military threat from the Peking-aided Cambodians was evident in their extensive defensive preparation. In addition to the large number of troops assembled in the south in the summer of 1978 Vietnam deployed anti-aircraft batteries around Ho Chi Minh City and other towns. But, when the Vietnamese marched into Phnom Penh on January 7, 1979, after crushing the Khmer Rouge defense in less than a week, they found mothballed jet fighters, armored personnel carriers, and artillery pieces in crates, and on the tarmac of Pochentong Airport rows of MIG-19s, which the uninstructed Khmer Rouge were unable to fly.

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* For details see the author's *Brother Enemy: The War after the War* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986) pp. 192–225, 247–259.

Is it possible that Vietnam had planned all along to bring Cambodia under its tutelage, as its enemies maintain? If Hanoi indeed had such a long-term plan no evidence of it has been unearthed, other than the age-old Vietnamese concern about the security threat from Cambodia outlined above. The sequence of events leading to the Vietnamese intervention leaves no doubt that the Vietnamese did not want a confrontation with Cambodia in the immediate postwar years; however, Khmer Rouge adventurism and apparent Chinese hostility forced Hanoi onto a course that was very much within its broad policy framework. Displaying the same strategic opportunism which the planners of the Communist Party of Vietnam demonstrated in the spring of 1975, the Vietnamese clearly sought to take advantage of the situation that offered itself to improve their situation. The international isolation of Democratic Kampuchea and the worldwide condemnation that its murderous policies evoked provided in many ways a favorable setting in which to deal definitively with the threat from Cambodia. Instead of mounting yet another retaliatory blow at the Khmer Rouge military machine, Hanoi decided to get rid of the regime altogether when the opportunity offered itself. Scarcely a month after toppling Democratic Kampuchea, Hanoi signed a twenty-year treaty of friendship with the newly-installed Heng Samrin regime to formalize the three-way "special relationship."

Hanoi's Political and Security Concerns in Cambodia

Contrary to Hanoi's expectations, its intervention in Cambodia, while removing the immediate threat, did not resolve the long-term security problem. China's punitive expedition into Vietnam in February 1979 and its sustained military pressure ever since, combined with the resistance mounted by the remnants of Democratic Kampuchea and non-communist Khmers, have sought to reverse the Vietnamese action. Therefore, the post-1979 Vietnamese policy toward Cambodia has been an all-out effort to defeat that challenge by military, political, and diplomatic means. Vietnamese intervention, which was originally designed to eliminate the threat to its security and economic development, has been transformed—by the fact of massive Vietnamese investment of resources and prestige and tenacious opposition from outside—into a matter of critical importance. To Vietnam's policymakers, opposition from China, ASEAN (the Association of South East Asian Nations), and the West to its presence in Cambodia is in reality a threat to the existence of an independent Vietnam. As Vietnamese officials explain it, having won their independence, they now are fighting off rear-guard attacks to isolate and weaken their country. If Vietnam was once ready to pay any price to gain its independence, it is now ready to bear any burden to protect it. Security, in the Vietnamese view, has no price tag.

Is Cambodia actually vital to the security of Vietnam? Or are the claims of a security threat in Cambodia and Laos just an excuse for Vietnam to subjugate its neighbors? Perhaps both of these questions could be answered affirmatively. While Vietnamese security concerns are genuine, they can be met only at the expense of their weaker neighbors. Desire for security and desire for domination are two sides of the same coin.

Recent historical experience points to the possibility that Cambodia, with its long and largely flat border area, could be used as a springboard for military attack and harassment against Vietnam. As evident from years of cross-border activity by Vietnamese communists, montagnard FULRO, and Khmer Serei groups, as well as forays by Saigon forces and American troops, an unfriendly regime in Cambodia could pose a headache for Vietnam and vice-versa. Ho Chi Minh City and several important towns are within artillery range from Cambodia, and, more important, border control of the Mekong River and its tributaries gives Cambodia considerable leverage over Vietnam. An important but unstated Vietnamese concern stems from the difficulty Hanoi has had in digesting the free-wheeling and often anarchic south. The stability of the south and the party's political control could be seriously undermined if just across the border in Cambodia a free market economy and pluralist political system were to develop and succeed. Moreover, the idea of neutrality remains popular among the South Vietnamese elite. If Cambodia were to emerge as a neutral country enjoying international bounty, while Vietnam, allied with the Soviet Union, continued to stagnate, it could further weaken Hanoi's political authority to rule the south. For Vietnam's political system to remain secure its Indochinese neighbors must stay within the same ideological and foreign policy framework and preferably at a similar level of economic development.

Hanoi's Rationale for the Domination of Cambodia

For obvious reasons Vietnam has not explained its security and political concerns. It has tried to provide a historical rationale for a Hanoi-led Indochina bloc. Vietnam was simply turning the tables on its historic enemies. In April 1979 the Vietnamese army daily *Quan Doi Nhan Dan* put forward the idea that the destinies of Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam are historically linked. In history when one of them was invaded or annexed, the independence and freedom of the rest were also endangered. Unity and fighting solidarity among the three, the paper said, "is the law for success of the revolutions of the three countries." Three years later a senior Vietnamese general developed the idea further to suggest that the historical evidence of the past fifty years show that enemies have used the territory of one Indochinese country to attack another and have strived to divide them to facilitate their rule. "To them," he said, "Indochina was a single battlefield" (Thai, p. K-5). So a regional strategic alliance among Indochinese countries was, he said, "an objective demand and also a subjective aspiration." In a further refinement of the idea, "objective demand" was raised to the level of inescapable law. In an important article in late 1984 General Le Duc Anh, the commander in charge of Cambodia, proclaimed that as China and other enemies were following a "law for all wars of aggression" by trying to divide Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia in order to subjugate them, a strategic and combat alliance among the three had become "the law of survival and development . . . " (p. K-6)—a notion that has since been officially adopted, as I mentioned earlier.

Applying the Indochinese "Law" to Cambodia

In its effort to implement the "law" of Indochinese alliance, Vietnam had to devote a substantial part of its administrative, diplomatic, and military resources to first create and then to consolidate a state power virtually from scratch. While Vietnam's "Lao apprentices," to borrow a phrase from Joseph Zasloff, have had time to learn from their revolutionary mentors and gradually to build their party, army, and government structure, in Cambodia the effort began at zero. The first congress of the newly-assembled Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Party—composed of survivors of Khmer Rouge purges and exiles from Hanoi—was meeting in Mimot when the Vietnamese army marched into Phnom Penh. Beginning in January 1979 Vietnam helped build the party, set up a government structure, and ran what might be called a shadow government composed of Vietnamese advisers. Vietnamese instructors helped to vet candidates for the party and provided ideological training. Compared to the approximately 600 members the party had had at the time of its Fifth Congress in 1981 the Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Party was reported to have had 10,000 members in 1986. An additional 50,000 were selected to be candidate members. Vietnamese party and government officials directed the effort to set up ministries, selected senior members, and provided guidance. Vietnamese advisers were present down to the district administration level. The system of sister provinces, which coupled every Cambodian province with a Vietnamese counterpart, has brought Vietnamese technicians, administrators, and teachers to Cambodia to develop a symbiotic relationship. Hundreds of Cambodian students and cadres have been sent to Vietnam to study and undergo training in various fields—from accounting to public health.

In recent years Khmers have taken over many responsibilities, and the number of Vietnamese advisers at both the central and provincial levels has gone down; nevertheless a clandestine Vietnamese organization codenamed "B-68"—until recently headed by Secretariat member Tran Xuan Bach—remains the most influential policy-making instrument. It is not clear whether or not Bach has kept that responsibility since his elevation to the Politburo during the Sixth Congress.

Some 140,000 Vietnamese troops are in Cambodia trying to defeat the Khmer Rouge and other guerrilla forces, safeguarding roads and towns, and training the Cambodian army. However, eight years after the intervention, Vietnam has achieved only a modest success in building a reliable political–military structure in Cambodia or in fleshing out its plans for pan-Indochinese cooperation. And the cost of that limited success has been exceedingly heavy. Compared to the shattered state of the country that the Vietnamese found in January 1979 a degree of normalcy has returned to Cambodia. There is again a currency; the market has been restored; and primary and secondary schools, postal and telecommunication services, and rudimentary health care are being offered again. All the provinces and district centers now have some form of government administrative presence. But the extent to which the Cambodian party and the administration remain loyal to Hanoi is a matter of conjecture. Deep historical antipathy toward the Vietnamese and suspicion about their intentions towards Cambodia has remained just under the surface of the Khmer sense of gratitude. Within two years of his appointment as the secretary general of the Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Party, Pen Sovan, who was handpicked by the Vietnamese, had to be summarily dismissed for his defiant attitude toward Hanoi. Although it is difficult to assess the degree of intimacy between the Vietnamese and the current leadership of the People's Republic of Kampuchea, the gradual weakening of the Hanoi-trained old guards in the party Central Committee has been a significant development. Such old guards who made up 58 percent of the Central Committee in 1981 had only 16 percent of the seats in the 1985 Central Committee (Kiernan, p. 18).

At lower administrative levels, unhappiness over the frequently overbearing attitude of Vietnamese officials and soldiers appears only to have reinforced the traditional antipathy. There has been a good deal of defection from government ranks, and quite a number who have stayed on reportedly maintain surreptitious links with the noncommunist resistance. Also, the Vietnamese effort to build an army for Cambodia has been a very modest success at best. Desertion, theft, and poor discipline have plagued the small organization, leading some senior Vietnamese officials whom I interviewed in March 1986 to wonder whether the army would ever be able to hold its own. Vietnamese soldiers in Cambodia continue to sustain considerable casualties—mostly from malaria and other diseases— and to suffer from malnutrition and low morale. An article in the *Vietnam Army Review* admitted that logistical supplies in Cambodia "have encountered numerous difficulties and are, in certain areas, very difficult." The article went on to say that efforts to procure food locally and increase animal husbandry by soldiers have met "numerous difficulties" and medicines for prevention and control of malaria are "woefully in short supply." An August 1986 Hanoi radio broadcast dropped the opaque jargon and described the condition of its infantrymen in western Cambodia as "dressed in rags, puritanically fed, mostly disease-ridden. . . ."

Building the Indochinese Alliance

Compared to the hard task of putting together a country and government shattered by a decade of destruction and bloodletting and winning the loyalty of a deeply suspicious populace, the job of building the superstructures of an Indochinese alliance has been easier. Since the beginning of 1980, Indochinese foreign ministers have met twice a year to issue statements. Whatever the value of those statements, the semi-annual meetings serve to remind the world about the existence of a Indochina bloc. In February 1983 at the first Indochina summit in Vientiane, the leaders announced that economic, cultural, and technical cooperation commissions would be formed in each country; the leaders, like the foreign ministers, promised to meet twice a year. In July 1983 the first-ever conference of chairmen of the three economic commissions met in Phnom Penh and announced that they would broaden cooperation "aimed at bringing into full play the potential in labour and resources as well as the material and technical bases of each country." As the friendship treaties have retroactively regularized the presence in Laos and Cambodia of Vietnamese troops, the formation of the commissions and public pronouncements seem designed to provide a legal basis for the presence of Vietnamese cadres and technicians. Vietnamese officials have stated that, although the three countries are still in a stage of small production, compared to the other two, Vietnam has "abundant labour sources" and the "largest contingent of cadres." Cambodia is endowed with agricultural, forestry, fishery, and hydroelectric potential but has little infrastructure and is "sorely lacking" in cadres (Thi, p. K-7). There is a clear implication that Cambodian resources could be fully exploited only with the help of Vietnamese cadres and technical expertise. A law passed by the Cambodian government in 1982 allowing old Vietnamese residents and their relatives to return to Cambodia seems to have provided a legal framework for Vietnamese migration. However, the extent of Vietnamese migration since 1979—what Hanoi's enemies called the "Vietnamization" or "colonization" of Cambodia—remains a matter of conjecture. Resistance leader Son Sann claimed that Vietnam had settled a million residents in Cambodia, but independent estimates put the number at about 260,000—less than half of the pre-1970 Vietnamese population in Cambodia (Vickery, p. 3, and Huxley, p. 168). Most Vietnamese immigrants were fishermen, small tradesmen, and technicians.

The Future

Hanoi has established a close network of party, government, and security relationships with Cambodia that give it enormous influence over the country. But Vietnam has attained this dominating position and has achieved greater security on its southern border at a heavy cost to its overall security, economy, and international prestige. While the guerrilla activity by the Khmer Rouge remains a manageable problem, Vietnam has to cope with perpetual harassment and acts of sabotage by its giant neighbor to the north, China. Vietnam is isolated internationally. One hundred and eighteen members of the United Nations voted against its occupation of Cambodia, and most Western nations have imposed an economic embargo against it. These acts have seriously affected Vietnam's effort at economic reconstruction.

Taking into consideration the continued unpopularity of Vietnam in Cambodia, it is difficult to argue that Hanoi has actually achieved an improvement in its security by occupying Cambodia. In fact, Vietnam's success in reducing the threat of a Khmer Rouge return ironically weakens its long-term position in Cambodia. The deeply rooted anti-Vietnamese feeling seems to be rising in reverse proportion to the sense of security people feel. The policy of using forced labor to build a defense barrier along the border is an example of questionable military security being achieved at the cost of political alienation. There are persistent reports of defection from the Army of the People's Republic of Kampuchea, low-level collusion with the resistance, and silent opposition to the Vietnamese domination within the ranks of the Heng Samrin regime. Unhappiness and opposition to Vietnamese involvement in the country's affairs are in no way diminished. If Vietnam were to withdraw or reduce sizably its troops and other security forces, the latent opposition could be brought out into the open, and Vietnam would lose its apparently strong position. Hanoi is not totally unaware of the tension that exists between Vietnamese officials and advisers and the Khmers. There are frequent warnings in the Vietnamese media against "big power chauvinism" (read arrogant Vietnamese behavior) and "narrow-minded nationalism" (read anti-Vietnamese feeling). A Vietnamese official recently admonished cadres in Cambodia for not fully grasping the basic principle that "helping our Cambodian friends is helping ourselves" (Hao, p. K-3). This, he said, has led to loose management and poor quality in various assistance programs in Cambodia.

Given this situation can one expect the Vietnamese to keep their promise of total withdrawal by 1990? In the light of Hanoi's intensified search for a political settlement in the fall of 1987 the answer seems to be "yes, perhaps." There has been a considerable softening of the Vietnamese position over the years. From the original defiant stand that the Cambodian situation was "irreversible," Vietnam has come to accept that power in Cambodia may have to be handed over to a coalition government headed by prince Norodom Sihanouk and incorporating elements of the Khmer Rouge. Hanoi has also relented in its demand that Cambodia be nonaligned but not follow a policy of neutrality. After a historic meeting with the exiled Prince Sihanouk in France in December 1987, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen said that the socialist nature of the government in Cambodia could be a matter of negotiation. As the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia approached its ninth anniversary and Moscow began exerting discreet pressure on Hanoi to end the conflict, there were indications that Vietnam might well have decided to bend its Indochinese "law" to accept a non-socialist, neutralist government in Cambodia where its security interest would be served through discreet influence rather than overt political control and military domination.

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4.

The Indochinese Federation Idea: Learning from History

MacAlister Brown

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> . . . framers of foreign policy are often influenced by beliefs of what history teaches or portends. . . . [P]olicy-makers ordinarily use history badly.
>
> E. May, *"Lessons" of the Past,* p. ix, xi

The predominant assumption about future Indochina relationships is that Vietnam will maintain a controlling influence. The reasons for this expectation spring primarily from the vast disparities between Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia in population, military mobilization, economic development, education, and political dynamism. The record of leadership by the Vietnamese in the anti-colonial resistance wars against France and the United States, and the preeminent role of the Vietnamese in organizing the communist party in Vietnam and its satellite parties in Laos and Cambodia leave no doubt that Vietnam has reason to feel that it deserves a preeminent position in relation to its neighbors in what the French designated as Indochina.

From the recent political history of the Indochina states, one could reasonably predict that the Vietnamese communists would feel themselves qualified, even destined, to continue leading their party partners of the national liberation war into the postwar era of socialist transformation. Struggle of various sorts has been the fate and glory of the Vietnamese communist leadership for five decades, and they have no reason to abandon their superior role in the economic and social revolutions yet to be won at home. The communist party of Laos has long been regarded as the partner or apprentice of its Vietnamese counterpart, and in Cambodia the present ruling party in Phnom Penh emerged directly from a 1978 Vietnamese invasion supporting Khmer Rouge exiles who subsequently reestablished the Khmer People's Revolutionary Party.

To predict a continuing Vietnamese involvement in advising the apprentice party governments in Laos and Cambodia should provoke no contradiction, so long as the prediction rests upon tangible indices of superior power, an historical entanglement, similar problems, and a common ideology. Even then one must beware of unanticipated turns of history, such as the flaring hostility between Vietnam and China after the final departure of American forces from the region in 1975. Also, the departure of a key personality from the chess board can necessitate sudden shifts in historical projections. Yet serious errors may be made if an idea or slogan from the past is mistakenly converted into a prediction of an inexorable future. This seems to have happened to the Indochinese Communist Party's allusions in the 1930s and 1951 to an *Indochinese Federation*. The propaganda mills of several governments, most notably the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea, the People's Republic of China, and Thailand, have ground away at demonstrating, on the basis of Indochinese Communist Party statements and resolutions up to five decades old, that the Vietnamese harbor a hidden agenda to bind Laos and Cambodia into a formal political union. Several independent scholars have echoed the argument, while others have taken pains to discredit the notion as resting on a misreading of the documentary record, and transcended by events. The government of Vietnam has explicitly denied the validity of the Indochinese federation idea since 1954.

Indochinese Federation: Blueprint or Bugbear?

Propaganda Tracts and Pamphlets

The propagandistic version of the Indochinese Federation project is set forth in the *Black Paper* issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Democratic Kampuchea in September 1978, just three months before Cambodia was overrun by Vietnam. This crudely written tract plays upon the name "chosen" for the party in 1930, the Indochina Communist Party, and refers to its "slogan," to wage a struggle to create an "Indochina Federation." The tract, however, is not accurate historically, even with respect to events that occurred in Cambodia. In more recent years the publications of the expanded Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea show much greater polish and sophistication, to the point where they set forth in the style of Western historiography and United Nations parliamentary documentation the record of Vietnam's "Indochina Federation Strategy."

A pamphlet published in March 1986 by the coalition government makes the argument in the following way (C.G.D.K., pp. 1–2). The name alone given to the Indochinese Communist Party in 1930 suffices to reveal unambiguously the "federation strategy." Later, in February 1951, the pamphlet points out, the manifesto of the newly formed Vietnam Worker's Party stated:

> . . . the people of Vietnam are willing to enter into long-term co-operation with the peoples of Laos and Cambodia, with a view to bringing about an independent, free, strong and prosperous federation of States of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

Also, according to the pamphlet, a few weeks later, at the National Congress of Unification, which merged the Vietminh front into the Lien Viet front, Ho Chi Minh stated, "We are going to realize soon the great union of Vietnam–Laos–Cambodia." Eight months later a "top secret" Vietnam Worker's Party directive supposedly told party members that "later on when conditions permit this to be carried out, the (three) revolutionary parties of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos will be reunited to form a single party." The evidence in the pamphlet then jumps to December 1976 when the Fourth Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam adopted a resolution which set Hanoi's long-term policy toward Laos and Cambodia as follows:

> . . . to preserve and develop the special relationship between the Vietnamese people and the fraternal peoples of Laos and Kampuchea, strengthen the militant solidarity, mutual trust, long term cooperation and mutual assistance in all fields . . . so that the three countries which have been associated with one another in the struggle for national liberation, will be associated with each other forever. . . .

A more recent publication of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea on the federation question also cites the famous captured "top secret" directive of 1951 which informed party members that "later on, when conditions permit this to be carried out, the three revolutionary parties of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos will be re-united to form a single party" (C.G.D.K., August 1986, p. 2).

Official Chinese statements on their disagreement and hostilities with Vietnam have not relied on historical argumentation, except to point out the extensive aid given by China to Vietnam during the wars of liberation. Chinese propaganda has attributed to Vietnam an aim for "regional hegemonism" and a policy of "aggression and expansion." This is supposed to have led Vietnam to attempt to assimilate and annex Cambodia in a policy of Vietnamization, In the propaganda scant attention is given to explaining these policies, but they are linked to the "Kremlin's strategic disposition for world hegemony" ("Crux of the Dispute", p. 22). The Indochinese Federation idea is not entirely absent from Chinese thinking apparently, because Deng Xiaoping reportedly harangued U.S. National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski concerning Vietnamese ambitions in terms of the federation idea (Porter, 1980, p. 2). Brzezinski's predecessor, Henry A. Kissinger has also contributed to the controversy by quoting Le Duc Tho, his cease-fire negotiations counterpart, as boasting about Vietnamese dominance in the region (Kissinger, p. 433). Official Chinese statements in the *Beijing Review* stress Vietnamese efforts to "establish regional hegemonism in Indochina," but the "Indochina Federation" idea is not the central theme. As already indicated however, they sometimes link Vietnamese expansionism to "the Kremlin's strategic disposition for world hegemony" ("Crux of the Dispute," p. 22).

The relative indifference shown by China toward the Indochinese Federation pronouncements of the Indochinese Communist Party is consistent with a stance that foreign correspondent Nayan Chanda encountered in a conversation with Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Han Nianlong in 1980. The diplomat made the astonishing claim that the Chinese had "never heard Ho Chi Minh say anything about an Indochina Federation" (Chanda, p. 129). Rather they officially traced Vietnamese designs for hegemony in Indochina back only so far as 1975, when their nation was unified. Privately, however, Chinese officials referred bitterly to devious Vietnamese actions during the anti-U.S. war which pointed toward future domination of the area by Vietnam.

Views of Scholars

Quite apart from official government propaganda, various scholars of Indochina have utilized the Indochinese Federation idea in their analysis of current events. In some cases they have even found the concept understated, already "passed into history," because "Hanoi is no longer satisfied, nor feels secure with anything less than a thoroughly united entity in the form of a Greater Vietnam" (Chang, p. 177). That same formulation was used in August 1985 by the Permanent Mission of Democratic Kampuchea to the United Nations in its "Memorandum" which said: "for almost seven years already Vietnam's activities in and relating to Kampuchea . . . have aimed always at the same and only goal, that is the annexation of Kampuchea into Vietnamese 'Indochina Federation' which would become later on the Great Vietnam." The memorandum goes on to cite the magazine of the Vietnam People's Army *Tap Chi Quan Doi Nahn Dan* (December 1984) in which General Le Duc Anh wrote "the peoples of Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea . . . must build ties of *special* solidarity, strategic alliance and close combat coordination according to a common strategic plan . . . *Indochina is a single battlefield*" (C.G.D.K., August 1987, p. 9). The official counterpart of such memoranda can be found in a September 23, 1985, letter from the Coalition Governmment of Democratic Kampuchea to inform the United Nations debate on the "situation in Kampuchea" by summing up various press statements on "the Vietnamization of Kampuchea."

An unofficial model of this line of argument is found in the *Indochina Report* of October 1984, published in Singapore. Its rather startling exposition of the Vietnamese presence in Cambodia is topped by speculation as to the ultimate goal of this process, in which an Indochinese Federation would be supplanted by a new model.

> The fascination that the Soviet expansionist pattern has long exerted on the Hanoi leadership has been such that, as good disciples of Stalin, they have transposed and adopted somehow or other the Soviet model in Indochina. At best, Kampuchea, as well as Laos, are becoming satellites of a new kind. At worst Kampuchea and Laos are destined to experience the fate of the forgotten Baltic countries, Lithuania, Lettonia, Estonia. ("Vietnamization of Kampuchea," p. 16)

A later report by the same publisher asserts that the "special relationship" between Laos and Vietnam began in October 1945 with the arrival of Laotian Prince Souphanouvong in Savannakhet, after his conference with Ho Chi Minh. The Committee For An Independent Laos, which Souphanouvong established at that time, set as one of its guidelines "to propagate and to support the policy of the Indochinese Peoples Federation, by developing moral, cultural and economic ties." The exact source of this quotation, from the archives of the French Surete,aa, is not indicated. It is not a part of the joint defense agreement negotiated by Souphanouvong between the governments of Laos and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. In any event, the article concludes that Laos today has been transformed into "a forward outpost of the Soviet–Vietnamese condominium over Indochina, as well as a westward bridgehead for future Soviet–Vietnamese moves on the mainland of Southeast Asia" (Pasakhom, p. 2). The addition of the Soviet element into the Indochina complex obviously complicates the historical continuity question, but also renders it less credible. Most Indochina observers, however, believe in outright Vietnamese expansionism or in perceived strategic necessities.

For example, in a long review of books on Indochina, Elizabeth Becker formulates the notion of the "Hanoi Pact"—which stands for regional communism under Vietnamese control over three countries. She takes pains not "to suggest melodramatically that Hanoi has had a secret master plan for fifty years, as many of Vietnam's critics say all too easily." She then highlights aspects of the story of self-serving Vietnamese communist leaders in contention with Cambodian nationalism, which "is far more interesting than such a simple conspiracy theory" (Becker, p. 20).

Dennis Duncanson has characterized the growth of Vietnamese control as a "strategic imperative." In 1978 he expounded this viewpoint in accounting for the "special relationship" formula devised by

Vietnam for its relations with Laos. The analysis takes an ominous turn, however, when Duncanson (quoting the British historian H. Seton-Watson) draws an analogy with the growth of Czarist Russia as described by its foreign minister, Gorchakov: "annexation of one 'barbarous' small khanate on Russia's borders 'in the interest of order' led to conflict with another beyond, and thus the boundary of civilization was inevitably extended." Hanoi, he suggests, may ultimately be tempted to vindicate Indochina's claims to Thailand's Northeast, ruled from Bangkok only since 1827, and peopled largely by Lao and Khmer peasants and a small Vietnamese minority. After invoking Czarist Russian history, Duncanson goes on to use Soviet history to describe the possible Vietnamese demands on Thailand that would transform it into "the first in a belt of satellites modelled on Eastern Europe" (Duncanson, p. 248).

Douglas Pike, the editor of *Indochina Chronology*, has used his ambiguous role as chronicler and commentator to suggest on occasion "what is clearly the present operative Hanoi policy; to move Indochina toward federation." To his thinking, the change in codewords to "special relationship," then "alliance," and now "comprehensive cooperation" in political, military, economic, and cultural affairs has not changed the original goal; "the sense of it is that the move is slowly but surely toward federation" (Pike, p. 24).

In his most recent book on Laos Arthur Dommen has also attributed the Indochinese Federation ambition to current Vietnamese leaders. Like Pike, he does not provide any documentary backing for his assertion, but rather presents it as a flat prediction:

> Once the national liberation stage of the revolution in Laos is completed (including the reabsorption of the right-bank provinces), the states will be joined in an Indochinese union with Hanoi as its capital.

He further asserts that the Vietnamese Communist Party will change its name to the Indochinese Communist Party as part of its "master plan" to form "a union similar to the U.S.S.R." (Dommen, pp. 166–67).

An economic version of the same type of analysis is found in a paper by Dr. Hans U. Luther from Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute, Bangkok, in which he argues that

> a review of recent political and economic events suggests that Laos has been designed to be part and parcel of a wider regional development scheme based on division of labour among the former Indochina countries which is structured according to so-called comparative advantage. It seems that according to this master plan, Vietnam will be the geographical base for industrial development, with its overpopulation and lack of employment, a skilled and disciplined industrial labour force, sufficient port facilities and infrastructure for export purposes. (Luther, p. 28)

In Luther's view, the economic role of Laos and Cambodia as junior partners will be appropriately rationalized. Nayan Chanda has put the same idea somewhat more delicately by suggesting that although the "Vietnamese have never mentioned publicly the idea of resource-sharing in Indochina . . . it would, however, be reasonable to think that Hanoi planners view Indochina not only as a strategic space but an economic one as well." He cites a cryptic reference to planning on an Indochinese scale by a Vietnamese planning official in early 1980, who saw the three countries as interdependent both strategically and economically (Chanda, p. 123).

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam denies any hegemonic ambitions towards its neighbors. The Foreign Ministry of Vietnam released an official document in 1978 to respond to the "slanderous accusations of the Kampuchean authorities." The Vietnamese referred to the speech of January 17, 1978, by Pol Pot, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kampuchea, charging Vietnam with standing for the establishment of an Indochinese Federation with only one party, one country, one people." The official Foreign Ministry refutation of this charge reviewed the party documents in a manner similar to the work of American scholars and concluded that after the 1951 Congress of the Indochinese Communist Party and following in particular the 1954 Geneva Conference on Indochina "the 'Indochinese Federation' question passed into history, as did French Indochina. Like Laos and Kampuchea, Vietnam has never referred to the Indochinese Federation question again." In concluding its long analysis, the Foreign Ministry declared that it would "continue to make every effort to strengthen and preserve the militant solidarity and fraternal friendship between the Vietnamese and

Kampuchean peoples, and between the peoples of the three countries of the Indochinese peninsula" (Socialist Republic of Vietnam, pp. 94, 99, 118).

Scholarly Documentation of the Federation Concept

The most scholarly and convincing analysis of this historic question has been made by the Americans Gareth Porter and William Turley and by Huynh Kim Khanh. The story is familiar to most scholars of the Vietnamese revolution but the highlights bear repeating.

How the Indochinese Communist Party Got Its Name

The name of the Indochinese Communist Party was imposed by a directive of the Kremlin written in late 1929 and implemented reluctantly in 1930 by the previously disunited communist groups in Vietnam. Huynh Kim Khanh quotes the Comintern's directive:

> The most important and absolutely most urgent task at the moment is for all the Indochinese Communists to establish a revolutionary party for the proletarian class, that is, a Communist party having a mass character. That party must be the only party, and Indochina may have only that party as the unique Communist organization. (Khanh, p. 124)

The Unification Conference of February 3–7, 1930, convoked by Nguyen Ai Quoc, agreed on establishing a single Vietnamese Communist Party, but the Comintern remained dissatisfied. Among other errors, the new party was declared guilty of narrow chauvinism and disregard for proletarian internationalism. A rectification meeting of the party's Central Committee in Hong Kong in October 1930 obediently adopted, after some debate, the name desired by the Comintern, the Indochinese Communist Party. A party periodical in early 1931 rationalized the new title as follows:

> Although the three countries are made up of three different races, with different languages, different traditions, different behavior patterns, in reality they form only one country. . . . It is . . . not possible to make a revolution separately for Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. In order to oppose the enemy of the revolution which has a united concentration of force in the entire

> Indochina, the Communist Party will have to concentrate the forces of the Indochinese proletariat in a united front, under the leadership of the Indochinese proletariat. . . . (Khanh, p. 128)

According to Gareth Porter's account, Nguyen Ai Quoc himself did not share the Stalinist view that revolutions in neighboring countries should create federated unions, which would ultimately merge into a "union of Soviet socialist republics of the world." Nor did he wish to assume a Vietnamese responsibility for leading the revolution in the less politically evolved nations of Laos and Cambodia. He proposed the Vietnamese Communist Party name at the Unification Conference but was not present at the rectification meeting in Saigon in October (Porter, 1983, pp. 58–60, and Porter, 1981). Porter's account differs in a few details from Khanh's, but the basic point regarding the origins of the Indochina designation is not in question.

William Turley's citation of the party's documents on the founding of the Indochinese Communist Party reveals an additional argument in favor of the Indochina designation. A Central Committee letter explained that the three countries had grown interdependent under colonial rule and required each other's support to end colonial rule and that "if separated each would lack sufficient conditions for economic activity" (Turley, p. 182). Thus, an economic argument, of somewhat tenuous validity, became a part of the debate early on. On the other hand, Turley mentions a strong arguing point against the Indochinese Communist Party formulation, namely, that both Laos and Cambodia lacked the requisite class structure to sustain a proletarian party.

Who Really Belonged to the Indochinese Communist Party?

During the 1930s the Vietnamese communists did not succeed in building Indochinese Communist Party strength throughout Indochina. Party members in Laos and Cambodia were exclusively Vietnamese living abroad, and the party cells suffered repeated devastation at the hands of the French security police (Sûreté). The exclusively Vietnamese leadership of the Indochinese Communist Party considered the Lao and Khmer people less capable and sophisticated than the Vietnamese, and they periodically admonished their party cohorts in Laos and Cambodia to make a better effort at recruitment among the indigenous and peasant population.

The almost total failure of the Indochinese Communist Party to extend its circle into the native populations of the French protectorates of Laos and Cambodia is revealed in the party resolutions and reports acquired by French intelligence. These captured documents further suggest the degree to which communist allegiance and activity was discouraged by efficient French police surveillance and arrests. The first Lao member of the communist party, according to the Museum of the Revolution in Vientiane, was Kham Sen, whom Bernard Fall identified, perhaps too generously, as a member of the Central Committee in 1936. (Compare Brown and Zasloff, p. 18, f.n. 35). A simple bust commemorates him in the museum with no information offered regarding the details of his life, other than his death in 1963. Otherwise no Laotian communist appears to be worthy of note until the defeat of Japan in 1945, when Kavsone Phomvihan returned to Laos from university study in Vietnam and joined the resistance to France. The captured reports of the Central Committee of the Indochinese Communist Party reveal that only four tiny cells existed by 1934, and "no organization for [Laotians] had yet been undertaken" (Brown and Zasloff, p. 15). The party's Central Committee acknowledged that the normal qualifications for membership could not be applied to the Lao people and urged what is regarded today as "affirmative action": less stringent entrance requirements and a special reservation of positions should be used to bring in some Laotian members.

In September 1936, after devastating raids by the Sureté, the Central Committee called in a secret letter for a new popular anti-imperialist front, which would bring together all nationalist organizations. With respect to non-Vietnamese people (the Lao, the Khmer, the Hmong, and so forth) the Central Committee had reached the "profound conviction" that "because of their still low level of economic and intellectual evolution [they] understand Communism with difficulty, and consequently do not assimilate it as easily as we do" (Brown and Zasloff, p. 18). Nonetheless, the patriotism of "these ethnic minorities" was lively and national revolutionary parties should be formed to organize them. Here was expressed, in a letter which the Sureté thought may have been written by Nguyen Ai Quoc himself, the sense of intellectual superiority which plagued efforts by the migrant Vietnamese to broaden the base of the communist movement in Laos and Cambodia. By December 1938 a Central Committee member of the Siamese Communist Party reported that the communists in Laos had made no progress since 1935 (Brown and Zasloff, p. 19). It was the Japanese elimination of French authority in Indochina in March 1945 that inspired the first sustained attention by the Indochinese Communist Party to maintaining an Indochina-wide approach to revolution.

In Cambodia the situation of the Indochinese Communist Party from 1930 until 1945 also reveals a sense of superiority on the part of migrant Vietnamese and very limited mobilization of Khmer members. The trajectory of the Indochinese Communist Party in Cambodia shows striking similarities to that in Laos. The French Sûreté repeatedly intercepted party communications and arrested its activists. The first Khmer member was recruited in 1930, but "for most of the 1930s revolutionary activity in Kampuchea" remained "limited to ethnic Vietnamese . . . and to members of the Chinese community" (Kiernan, p. 13). By 1934, as in Laos, five cells had been organized, but police raids soon destroyed the organization in Phnom Penh. The Khmer population was reported by French police in 1936 as showing "complete indifference" towards the communist movement. By 1941 the Indochinese Communist Party itself acknowledged that there was "still no trace of a party in Kampuchea" (Kiernan, pp. 18, 42). Following the seizure of power by Japan in 1945 the communist movement came alive in military and political actions with the Vietminh and liberation committees and fronts, but by 1951, there were only forty Khmer members of the Indochinese Communist Party (Porter, 1983, p. 66).*

This record of an Indochinese Communist Party composed almost exclusively of Vietnamese does not imply complete indifference by the leadership to promoting revolution throughout Indochina. The Central Committee did criticize the efforts made in both Laos and Cambodia and exhorted members to do better. Yet until the end of World War II, the activity of the Indochinese Communist Party outside of Vietnam depended almost entirely upon the determination of revolution-minded Vietnamese, notwithstanding the transnational organizational framework imposed by the Comintern.

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* French sources estimated one year later that 150 Khmers were joined to the newly-formed Khmer People's Revolutionary Party, along with 1,800 local-born Vietnamese (Kiernan, p. 83; Porter, 1983, p. 66).

The Indochinese Communist Party and Political Self-Determination

Although the Indochinese Communist Party accepted until 1951 the Stalinist model of party jurisdiction paralleling colonial jurisdictions, Central Committee resolutions included deviations in favor of political self-determination. The 1932 "Action Program" of the Indochinese Communist Party spoke of the peoples of Indochina as fraternally allied with one another, but it promised the right of self-determination. The idea of a single Indochinese state following the revolution first appeared in a resolution on work among minorities by the First Party Congress in 1935. The future state was originally referred to as a "Union of Soviet Republics of Indochina," which was later changed to "Federation of Democratic Republics" to reflect the actual democratic phase of revolution. Again "the right to self-determination, including the right of separation to form an independent state and to adopt a political regime of their choice" was included. "The Soviet worker–peasant–soldier government of Indochina promises not to interfere in their internal affairs" (Porter, 1983, pp. 62–64). This was a patent deviation, though not expressed in public, from the Stalinist model as exemplified in the U.S.S.R.

An Indochinese Communist Party resolution of June 1941 during World War II, when visions of a French departure were becoming more focused, again promised a choice between joining an Indochinese Federation or separate nationhood. "After driving out the French and the Japanese" it will be "up to the peoples living in Indochina to either organize themselves into a Federation of Democratic Republics or remain separate national states" (Socialist Republic of Vietnam, p. 95). Three months after the defeat of Japan, as France was straining its efforts to reoccupy its Indochinese possessions, the Indochinese Communist Party ostensibly dissolved itself in order to emphasize the multiparty national front against colonialism. Notwithstanding its official resolution on self-dissolution, the party apparatus continued to operate clandestinely, and party membership grew from 5,000 in August 1945 to several hundred thousand by the summer of 1950. For the first time, during this period, the party began seriously to enlist Lao and Khmer members, but in numbers scarcely noticeable. The following year the party reemerged, at a Second National Congress, February 11–19, 1951, under the name of Vietnam Worker's Party. This avoided the label of communist, which would restrict its political appeal, and focused on Vietnamese nationalism, as Ho Chi Minh had preferred in 1930, rather than on Indochina. (In 1976, after Ho's death, the party changed its name again to the original designation of February 1930, the Vietnamese Communist Party.)

To replace the transnational approach of the now defunct Indochinese Communist Party, it was decided to form three separate "revolutionary organizations" suited to the conditions of their respective countries. It was expected that the revolutions in the three countries would move at different speeds, with Vietnam in the vanguard (Duiker, p. 142; Socialist Republic of Vietnam, p. 98). A month after this fateful party decision, a joint "alliance" of the revolutionary national fronts of the three nations—Lien Viet, Neo Lao Issara (Free Lao Front), and Samakhum Khmer Issarak (United Issarak Front)—was formed, "based on the principles of free choice, equality and mutual assistance" (Socialist Republic of Vietnam, p. 98). The three national fronts had been founded in May 1946 in Vietnam, April 1950 in Cambodia, and August 1950 in Laos. At the latter meeting twenty-five members of the Indochinese Communist Party were present. At the Cambodia meeting five of the leaders were definitely party members (Kiernan, p. 79; Brown and Zasloff, Appendix C-2).

With this organizational departure from the previous Indochina scope of the party came two somewhat contradictory addenda: "the Vietnamese Party would reserve the right to supervise the activities of its brother parties [yet to be founded] in Cambodia and Laos," but "later, if conditions permit, the three revolutionary parties of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos will be able to form a single Party: the Party of the Vietnam–Khmer Laotian Federation" (Duiker, p. 143).* According to Dennis Duncanson, only in the version of the Manifesto of the Vietnam Worker's Party that was published by China (in English) in May 1951 was the promise of a federation of states followed by an additional phrase: "if the three peoples so desire" (Turner, p. 78).

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* Duiker cites an internal party document of November 1, 1951. The statements of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea which refer to this document render it as "later, *when* conditions permit," suggesting the stronger intent. Turner (p. 70) uses the same phrasing.

One of the reasons for establishing separate national communist parties was to counter the French policy of granting nominal independence to its three Indochina protectorates, because nascent patriotic feelings might be manipulated to create tensions within an Indochina-wide revolutionary movement. At the same time the need for an alliance of the three movements, notwithstanding their different rates of progress, was becoming manifest as the Vietnamese-led resistance war grew in intensity.

Indochina-Wide Strategies for National Liberation

As their resistance war progressed the Vietminh military leaders came to appreciate the importance of the strategic unity of Indochina for purposes of expelling the French. In 1947 Viet Minh mountain bases were attacked by French forces jumping off from Laos and Cambodia. In 1950, General No Nguyen Giap articulated this insight:

> Indochina is a single strategic unit, a single battlefield, and here we have the mission of helping the movement to liberate all of Indochina. This is because militarily, Indochina is one bloc, one unit, in the invasion and defense plans of the enemy. . . . Laos and Cambodia temporarily have become the secure rear areas of the enemy. . . . (Turley, p. 11)

By taking the offensive in Laos, Giap pushed General Henri Navarre into his fateful defensive disposition at Dienbienphu. Later in the resistance war against American and South Vietnamese forces, an Indochina-wide strategy again made significant use of eastern Laos and the Cambodian territory. The Ho Chi Minh Trail through eastern Laos and the sanctuaries along the Cambodia–South Vietnam border, as well as the port of Sihanoukville were indispensable to the communist strategy in South Vietnam. The tactics for securing these assets were not the same, however. In the case of Laos, the communist-led Patriotic Front (the Pathet Lao) claimed territorial control in two eastern provinces in accordance with their interpretation of the Geneva Agreement of 1954, and this area was expanded by military partnership with North Vietnam, in violation of the Geneva Agreements of both 1954 and 1962. In Cambodia the Communist movement was not so well established militarily nor cohesive in its leadership and ideological orientation, and the national leadership of Prince Norodom Sihanouk was much stronger than the politics of family rivalries that consumed the Royal Lao Government. Hence, for achieving the immediate goal of victory in South Vietnam, a policy of exploiting Sihanouk's neutralism was more appropriate for North Vietnam than either unrestrained intervention or bolstering the Khmer communists.

The Federation Idea: No Blueprint for the Future

Thus in summary, the Indochina Federation idea appeared in specific historical contexts which no longer exist. The Comintern strongly influenced the formation of a transnational Indochina party, but the Vietnamese found the task almost beyond them. The breakup of the Indochinese Communist Party into three national parties in 1951 was girded with devices for maintaining Vietnamese leadership, while providing gratification to national sensibilities. As the resistance wars against France and the United States progressed, the strategy of using all of Indochina to fight the war for South Vietnam was so advantageous that it became irresistible and was adopted by both sides. Yet, in the course of the anti-colonial struggle waged primarily (but far from exclusively) by the Vietnamese, national feelings grew stronger in Laos and Cambodia. When the communists finally claimed victories in Phnom Penh, Saigon, and Vientiane in 1975, the political context was quite different from what it had been in 1930 or in 1951 when Indochinese Federation ideas were first enunciated. To assume that after thirty years of anti-colonial war the communist leaders of Vietnam would automatically hearken back to the political formulas of the early years of struggle is to ignore the context created by the war itself. In Laos and Cambodia revolutionary parties stressing *national* renovation took power, and the common foreign enemy was expelled. Military cooperation might be advantageous if new threats from abroad were to arise, but the Indochinese Federation was clearly questionable as a blueprint for future relations in the region, even among three nations boasting a common source of revolutionary ideology and strategy.

Historical Practice of International Federation

What is the historical record of federation as a device for merging nations such as the three Indochina states of today? Federation provides for the division of activities between the autonomous parts and the common or central organs of a composite whole. The exact division of responsibilities varies depending on the type of political association. The essential element of federation, however, is the existence of multiple governments within a single state. One of its most fundamental advantages is that it provides "a means to unify diverse peoples for important but limited purposes, without disrupting their primary ties to the individual polities that constitute the federal system" (Elazar, p. 354). One can recognize that federation might appeal to the Vietnamese as a means of uniting the Indochina states for the "important but limited purpose" of defending and extending their socialist revolution.

There are, of course, a variety of federal systems as well as traditions. The British tradition has been expressed in the Commonwealth in Canada, India, Malaysia, Nigeria, Cameroon, Australia, and also in the United States. There are a few states in the Hispanic tradition (Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico) and three Germanic federations (West Germany, Switzerland, and Austria). The Soviet Union, which once called itself a federation, represents a different tradition as well. The term "union" brings to mind the short-lived United Arab Republic, which joined Gamal Abdel Nasser's Egypt to Syria between 1958 and 1961. Other Arab states, particularly Libya, have talked loosely about intentions to federate from time to time, but none of these projects has come to pass.*

The distinction between a union and a federation, or even confederation, is not important for this discussion. Whatever the terminology used, the aim is to present a common foreign policy and to provide for joint defense, with some economic coordination also sought at a minimum. Where the federation or union is taken seriously, some provision might be made for a common military defense force under a unified command and central organs for legislative activity and central economic planning and budgeting. Out of these activities might grow a common currency and a centrally-controlled tariff structure. In some situations an official language or languages have to be designated. A common foreign policy might lead to a unified diplomatic corps. Whether each of these developments will be seen as positive, rather than as a loss of national or ethnic self control, depends on the benefits, if any, that such arrangements clearly provide to the units of the larger community. As the American Civil War amply demonstrates, such perceptions of advantage are not always present or enduring throughout the polity. Federations have not infrequently fragmented, and in recent years the formation of new unions has shown some interesting patterns.

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* The United Arab Republic (1958–1961) embraced Egypt and Syria, with Cairo as its capital, and common citizenship. Yemen agreed to join in 1958 but did not give up its separate foreign policy and seat in the United Nations. Syrian rebels ended the U.A.R. in September 1961, with army officers particularly unwilling to submit to Egyptian authority. Iraq and Jordan also formed an Arab union which lasted less than three months. Libya has attempted unions with Morocco and Egypt at various times.

Recent Attempts at Federation

The most recent efforts to form federated states have occurred in the Third World. In Asia, Malaysia was formed in 1963, embracing the British-created federation of Malaya and the state of Singapore and the colonies of Sabah and Sarawak. Singapore departed from the arrangement two years later, and in May 1969 serious communal rioting took place. The Malay element has gained increasing dominance throughout the history of the state, and the general arrangement now—with thirteen separate legislatures and constitutions serving the constituent parts—seems to work quite well.

In Africa, the British again provided federal arrangements before granting independence to some of its colonies. The largest of these was Nigeria, which suffered a tragic civil war six years after independence. The British-instituted Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland did not even survive the granting of independence, as the latter state chose to become Malawi. The former Italian colony of Eritrea was pushed by the United Nations into a federation with Ethiopia in 1952 but this was soon disputed by a liberation front, which remains at odds with Ethiopia to this day. Northern and Southern Sudan remain similarly at odds with one another, in spite of formal unification since independence. One of two success stories to be found in Africa is the union of Tanzanyika and the relatively small island of Zanzibar in April 1964, one year after independence. The new state, Tanzania, has shown "a remarkable degree of national unity among a very large number of small ethnic groups." It also enjoys the benefit of a common national language (Swahili), and a government ideology that tends to minimize the gap between an elite and the masses (Morrison *et al*, p. 357). The other success was the federation of French and British Cameroon, at the time of independence. What colonialism had torn apart was sewn back into a viable political unit, but Cameroon abandoned federation for unitary rule within a few years.

At the present time all the states of Africa except three (Comoro Islands, Nigeria, and Sudan) have unitary governments. Three other states were federal at the time of independence, but their leaders moved "to unitary rule as quickly as they could do so" (Phillips, p. 102). The reason for this tendency is that unitary systems are easier to run than federal ones. Even though African states often preside over non-homogenous societies, "unitary governments are clearly the dominant form in the continent" (Phillips, p. 102). The federations that survive today were established by colonial powers before independence was granted. With the exception of Tanzania there seems to be no case of established governments merging voluntarily into a successful federation or union. The federal system imposed upon Ethiopia and Eritrea has not survived, as the Eritrean people have sought to separate themselves from their historic neighbor. The voluntary union of Egypt and Syria, which reflected the particular ideology of pan-Arab nationalism that flourished under the charismatic leadership of Nasser, did not survive more than two years. The post-Nasser gestures in the direction of transnational Arab solidarity initiated by Libya's Moammar el-Qaddafi (with Egypt, with Morocco) have remained only gestures.

One might ask whether there is a particular communist version of uniting nations in a new state. Yugoslavia federated under communist leadership in 1945. Given its multi-ethnic composition such a structure was recognized by communists and non-communists alike as essential to the avoidance of dangerous "Balkanization" in the area. The case of the Baltic states, which now live as republics within the Soviet Union, is notable for the fact that the entry was not truly voluntary and is still resisted diplomatically. The remaining republics of the Soviet Union were regarded by Moscow as legacies from the Czarist Empire or were overrun in the course of defeating Hitler's Germany.

Prospects for an Indochinese Federation

In short, the historical record shows that it is extremely unlikely that established states will voluntarily abandon their sovereignty to join a larger political system. Is there then any prospect for the Indochina states to consolidate their political relationships?

For the three nations federation could in theory open the door to such political centralization as a unified armed force, a common currency, common citizenship, a central budget, a unified foreign policy (with only one vote in the United Nations), a federal legislature, a common trade and tariff policy, a federal economic plan, and taxation. Such a literal translation of the federation idea boggles the mind. Even a loose confederation, with authority remaining predominantly in the three states, bears little relation to reality. The shaky confederation of the former British colonies in America (1777–1789), which ended happily with the formulation of "a more perfect union," is hardly likely to reproduce itself in an unnatural union of French Indochina. The mutual advantage that such consolidation would be expected to produce, would probably be far outweighed by the advantages of a separate quasi-sovereign existence, even though such separateness may necessitate a disagreeable reliance on external assistance. The explosion of new states in the Third World since 1960 has imbued even the humblest of mini-states with a sense of entitlement to formal independence, which no other values or ideology are likely to supersede. Only the goal of national security or national prosperity is likely to offer any grounds for compromise with sovereign national identity. Unless union with Vietnam were the only means of saving the Laotian leadership from military occupation or counter-revolution or economic destitution Laotians are unlikely to give up their formal recognition as a sovereign state. In the case of Cambodia, accreditation by the United Nations is something the People's Republic of Kampuchea would dearly like to acquire at the expense of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea; leaders of the People's Republic of Kampuchea seem ready to negotiate about it with all but the Khmer Rouge. To become instead a mere subunit in an Indochina union would mean a severe setback to national self-esteem and popular satisfaction.

To sell the idea of a voluntary Indochina federation or confederation, in any concrete institutional form, would be to work against the grain of history and would require diplomacy of extraordinary skill.

The disadvantages would overwhelm the promised benefits in the mind of any nationally conscious Lao or Khmer leader. The superior role in administering the union would be expected to flow to the Vietnamese, while the Lao and Khmer resumed their inferior administrative and commercial position of the French colonial days. The disparity in education and experience alone among the cadres of the three nations would cast the Lao and Khmer in a secondary role in the central organs; and the functions retained by the national political units would be subjected to even heavier pressures to conform to the requirements of ideological solidarity in the name of the union.

Yet, diplomatic persuasion is not at issue because Vietnam presumably possesses the power to impose a federation. Such an act of intervention, whether by military occupation or political subterfuge, would breed disaster. Vietnam has already suffered partial penalties for its act of will in removing Pol Pot's Democratic Kampuchea from power, but it has not attempted to subordinate the successor regime, the People's Republic of Kampuchea, to a formal loss of national sovereignty. Were it to do so, the viability of a Vietnamese-supported regime would be in greater jeopardy than the present Heng Samrin version. Khmer administrative personnel would be seen more widely as collaborators (Quislings), and the burden of military support and administrative bolstering would be even heavier for the Vietnamese than it is today.

History tells us that the Communist Party of Kampuchea, which shared a communist revolutionary orientation with the Vietnamese Worker's Party in 1975, would not agree even to a "special relationship" after victory (Democratic Kampuchea, p. 75; Chandler and Kiernan, p. 304). Furthermore, its Hanoi-oriented members were systematically purged by the Pol Pot leadership. The Lon Nol government in 1970 presided over a pogrom directed against local Vietnamese, which transcended their political inclinations. The xenophobic aggressiveness of Khmer Rouge forces along Cambodia's border with Vietnam in 1975–1978 finds its roots in centuries of animosity and conflict between Khmer and Vietnamese in the Mekong delta region. Thus an imposed union of the Khmer and Vietnamese people would encounter passionate resistance clothed in bitter historical memories. Compared to the present unpronounced "special relationship," a forced federation would engender resistance markedly stronger than the present growing efforts of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea.

In Laos, Arthur Dommen foresees that the "Laotians themselves, in another exercise of democracy will vote to integrate their country with Vietnam and Cambodia" (Dommen, p. 167). But this idea of willing self-abnegation is hard to imagine. The Lao People's Revolutionary Party has certainly not won the support of its nation to the extent of commanding national suicide. Such a vote would surely not represent a free referendum but a discernible act of power. If Vietnamese military and party elements dispensed even with fraudulent voting to legitimate a forced union, the Laotian resistance elements would be outraged and might take some dramatic action. Yet the most visible impact might be seen in the resurgent exodus across the Mekong River. If Vietnamese forces actively patrolled the border to cut this off, their relations with Thailand, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and the United States would certainly worsen.

Vietnam would be foolhardy to attempt to impose a federation or a transnational authority on its two neighbors. It would offend their national feelings, breed resistance, stimulate desertion, and probably reduce productivity. All of these losses would be offset by precious little gain. Military security for Vietnam against the threats of China and Thailand are serious concerns, but Vietnam's security would not be enhanced by further reducing the Lao or Khmer sense of military self-reliance. At present, Vietnamese forces are able to station themselves wherever they want to in Laos and Cambodia, even though there is no federation or transnational authority. In economic terms, the benefits of joint planning and complementary trade can be garnered from existing trilateral commissions, advisory arrangements, and conferences. Current arrangements include meetings (on at least an annual basis) of three nation representatives for foreign policy, Mekong River management, economic cooperation and planning, technical cooperation, news management, cultural cooperation, and unpublicized areas of military coordination. Tighter relationships might strain or snap the bonds of cooperation, which are already open to charges that the Vietnamese are engaged in exploitation of their weaker neighbors.

This leaves open the question of "Vietnamization" through colonization and intermarriage, which many resistance elements perceive to be already underway. Such a policy would have to be undertaken for the long term, which hardly deals with Vietnam's immediate security and prosperity problems. It would doubtless breed potential long-term consequences as did the gradual settlement of Jews into the Holy Land, or Afrikaners into Southern Africa, or Japanese into Korea. So long as the Vietnamese were perceived as an intruding nationality in Laos and Cambodia—and if they lost their ethnic identity the purpose of "Vietnamization" would be negated—the potential for a new chapter in national liberation warfare would exist. The uprising of the Bengalis in East Pakistan in 1971 against domination by their countrymen from the Punjab and the bloody purge of overseas Chinese in Indonesia might find their counterpart in revolts against alien Vietnamese in Laos or Cambodia.

Such historical analogies are obviously crude; nonetheless, it seems reasonable at a minimum to learn from history that nationalism is a formidable idea in current world politics and certainly in Southeast Asia. There seem to be no contemporary examples of nations having enjoyed independence for a year or more voluntarily abandoning this condition. Domination by intruding nationalities within a state breeds strife and revolutionary violence. Were Vietnam to impose a union or federation of the three Indochina states by force it would probably generate serious resistance and raise the cost of coordinating the defense and consolidation of the three socialist revolutions. The existing cooperative/consultative/advisory arrangements worked out under Vietnamese leadership among the three states are close to optimal in terms of costs and benefits for Vietnam. Therefore, a rational Vietnamese policy toward the two ideological partners will probably continue to depend upon political leadership devices rather than upon centralized authority or administration.

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5.

The Special Relationship In Indochina

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The installation of a Vietnamese-backed regime in Cambodia in January 1979 raised new questions about Vietnam's intentions in Indochina. Critics of Vietnam's actions alleged that Hanoi was attempting to create an "Indochinese Federation" under Vietnamese domination. Despite Vietnamese denials of these allegations, it has been clear that since 1975 Hanoi has sought to translate the wartime arrangement of strategic cooperation among the three Indochinese countries into a broader, more formal, peacetime relationship.

Laying the Foundation

The establishment of socialist regimes in the three Indochinese countries set the stage for Hanoi to press for a more comprehensive relationship between the three nations. Within months of the establishment of the last of these regimes, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Hanoi was authoritatively calling for a trilateral relationship. In a major policy statement to the Vietnamese National Assembly in June 1976, party chief Le Duan declared that Hanoi would "do everything in its power . . . to strengthen the militant solidarity, mutual trust and long-term cooperation and assistance in all fields" with its two neighbors so that the three countries would be "forever attached to one another in the building and defense of their respective countries" (Le Duan, p. K/21).

However, Hanoi soon realized that its plans for enhanced Indochinese ties would have to be shelved because of the reluctance and hostility of the Phnom Penh regime. Instead, Hanoi focused its attention on building ties with Vientiane, mapping out a relationship that would become the model for Vietnam's ties with the Heng Samrin regime and the basis for an Indochinese relationship.

Hanoi started by putting its relationship with Vientiane on a formal footing in July 1977 when the two countries signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation.* The treaty, which laid out the terms of the "special relationship" between Vietnam and Laos, echoed the language of the 1976 Vietnamese policy statement. It called for the two countries to be "forever bound in their national construction and national defense," stressing particularly the need for expanding economic cooperation and "multiplying contacts between the two countries." In addition, the two sides pledged to cooperate in "reinforcing" their national defense capacity and "preserving their independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity" against outside enemies.

The new treaty undoubtedly reflected a close relationship but stopped short of defining it in the terms used by Moscow to characterize its tight-knit relationship with its East European bloc allies. The treaty between Vietnam and Laos, for example, used the term "proletarian internationalism" rather than "socialist internationalism" to characterize the basis for Vietnamese–Laotian relations. And it obscured the nature of the two countries' national defense commitment by not including the pledge common in Soviet treaties with its Warsaw Pact allies that an attack on one country is considered an attack on the other.

In addition, the treaty emphasized the independence of each country in the relationship. Reflecting this theme, the treaty indicated that Vietnamese–Laotian relations would be based on the principles of "complete equality, respect of each other's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity and legitimate interests" and specifically pledged to "strictly respect" each other's "independent international policies." The image of separateness was further reinforced as the two sides signed a second pact agreeing to demarcate the Vietnamese–Laotian border.

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* The text of this treaty may be found in the Appendix.

Just as they set the themes that would later form the framework of the Indochinese relationship, Hanoi and Vientiane established the method that would be used later for developing the trilateral relationship—the reliance on extensive exchanges at all levels and cooperation agreements in all sectors between the two countries—as they sought to implement the new bilateral pact. Reflecting the frenzy of bilateral activity that followed the signing of the treaty, Carlyle Thayer noted that from July 1977 to November 1980, Vietnamese and Laotian media reported that Vientiane dispatched twenty-two ministerial-level delegations and twenty-three mid-level delegations to Vietnam, while Hanoi reciprocated by sending twenty-two ministerial-level and seventeen mid-level delegations to Laos. These exchanges, Thayer noted, resulted in at least "forty-one separate agreements" (Thayer, p. 259).

Ties with Cambodia

The installation of the Vietnamese-backed Heng Samrin regime in Cambodia in January 1979 removed the last barrier to the development of an Indochinese relationship. Hanoi proceeded slowly in attempts to foster trilateral cooperation, but moved quickly to formalize its bilateral ties with Phnom Penh in an effort to establish the legitimacy of the regime and a legal justification for the continuing Vietnamese troop presence in Cambodia. As it had done with Laos, Vietnam signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the Heng Samrin regime.* This treaty was virtually identical in all respects to Vietnam's pact with Laos, calling for increased cooperation, while emphasizing the separateness and independence of the two countries. Similarly, in the wake of the treaty, Hanoi and Phnom Penh began a program of extensive bilateral exchanges. Two months after the signing of the pact, another piece of the basic framework for trilateral cooperation was put in place when Vientiane and Phnom Penh signed an agreement on economic, cultural, scientific, and technological cooperation. The five-year pact called for bilateral cooperation between the two countries in several fields, including agriculture, forestry, and fishing and increased contacts at all levels between the parties and governments of the two nations.*

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* The text of this treaty may be found in the Appendix.

The basic framework for trilateral cooperation was finally completed in 1981 with the establishment of a Cambodian state and party. The Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Party, which was unveiled at the May 1981 Party Congress, was portrayed as the heir of all genuine revolutionary movements in Cambodia since the fifteenth century. Its lineage was traced through the Vietnamese-dominated Indochinese Communist Party. In addition, the newly-revealed party adopted a structure similar to that used by Vietnam and Laos. The new state structure unveiled at the first session of the People's Republic of Kampuchea National Assembly in June 1981 was also an institutional clone of its Vietnamese and Laotian counterparts consisting of a National Assembly, a State Council, and a Council of Ministers.

At the same time, Hanoi began a policy that gave a significant boost to the development of an Indochinese relationship, the policy of "twining." Under this policy, Vietnamese provinces and major cities are paired with cities and provinces in Cambodia and Laos. The Vietnamese provinces are responsible for providing aid and technical expertise to their sister provinces. The institutionalization of this policy has resulted in a more extensive bilateral relationship than would have resulted had contacts been limited to central-level organizations.

Instituting Trilateral Cooperation

With a pattern of extensive bilateral interaction between Vietnam and its neighbors already established, Hanoi moved in early 1980 to institutionalize cooperation on a trilateral basis. Establishing what would be the first of a series of forums for Indochinese cooperation, the foreign ministers of the three countries met in January 1980 to "exchange views on international issues of common concern" and to coordinate and "strengthen" trilateral cooperation ("Communique," p. K/4).

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* The text of this agreement may be found in the Appendix.

These meetings, which until recently have been held semiannually in January and July, have over the years served as a convenient arena for addressing regional problems, particularly the Cambodian issue, and for allowing the Indochinese countries to counter proposals from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) states with a "coordinated" Indochinese proposal. At the same time, Hanoi has used this forum to reinforce the image of Laos and Cambodia as independent states acting on an equal footing with Vietnam.

Although the foreign ministers' meetings and bilateral exchanges between the Indochinese countries produce coordinated positions on a range of foreign policy issues, Vientiane and Phnom Penh appear to have some freedom to forge their own foreign policy lines. For example, in 1979 Vientiane lagged behind Moscow and Hanoi in publicly protesting Chinese actions on the Sino-Laotian border, and in January 1980, neither Laos nor Cambodia publicly endorsed the Vietnamese position, espoused in a *Nhan Dan* editorial, that "an attack on one Indochinese country is an attack on all three" (*Nhan Dan*, pp. K/3–K/5). Also, Phnom Penh and Vientiane, until its party congress in November 1986, have failed to follow Vietnam's two-year-old policy of avoiding heated polemics with China.

In the three years following the first foreign ministers' meeting, Hanoi moved slowly to establish the trilateral relationship. The framework of regularized cooperation was institutionalized as news agencies, health ministers, party propaganda and training departments, bankers, and the Mekong committees of the three countries held their first meetings. During this period plans to raise this cooperation to the highest level, by convening an Indochinese summit conference, were announced at the July 1981 foreign ministers' meeting.

The Indochinese summit conference finally took place in February 1983 after two years of preparations and two unexplained postponements. The conference was attended by delegations headed by the top party and state leaders of each country: Le Duan and Pham Van Dong from Vietnam, Kaysone Phomvihan and Souphanouvong from Laos, and Heng Samrin and Chan Si from Cambodia. The summit marked a turning point in the development of the trilateral relationship. Highlighting the progress in establishing Indochinese ties, the summit statement called the relationship "special" and characterized it as a "law of development" of each country's revolution and a "fundamental factor" for the defense of their independence. In addition, the statement indicated that the relationship had been put on a new and closer footing, that Indochinese ties were now based on the principle of "socialist internationalism," the term used by Moscow to describe its close ties with the bloc ("Indochinese Summit Statement," pp. I/6–I/9).

The summit statement also announced a program of practical steps to develop relations among the three countries, including holding summit conferences on an irregular basis and continuing the semiannual meetings of the foreign ministers. More important, the summit decided to move economic cooperation from a bilateral to trilateral basis, calling for the establishment of a trilateral economic cooperation committee, which would meet semiannually to discuss "economic cooperation and coordination of national economic plans," and of commissions in other unspecified economic areas ("Indochinese Summit Statement," pp. I/7–I/8).

Although it took a number of steps to tighten trilateral ties, the summit stopped far short of calling for formal integration of the three countries, reflecting instead a degree of sensitivity to projecting an image of an Indochinese state under Vietnamese domination. In outlining the principles for relations among the three countries, the final statement was careful to emphasize the need to guard against "any manifestation of big-nation chauvinism," and the need to respect each other's "legitimate interests and independence," the "equality of the three countries" and the principle of "free consent" ("Indochinese Summit Statement," p. I/7).

After the close of the conference, the three countries demonstrated increasing readiness to institutionalize the Indochinese relationship. The first semiannual meeting of the three countries' state commissions for trilateral economic cooperation was held in July 1983. Two documents were reportedly signed at the meeting: a program for cooperation in economic, cultural, scientific, and technical areas and a protocol on the commissions. Indochinese media, however, typically did not publish the documents. Since July 1983, other ministries—planning, culture, trade, finance, labor, education, communications, and transportation, to name a few—have joined the growing number of central-level state and party-level departments holding regular trilateral meetings.

Ideological Framework for the Special Relationship

As trilateral cooperation has gradually grown, Hanoi has sought to provide an ideological framework to support this development. It has wisely drawn on the past, using the shared experiences and ideology of the revolutionary elites of the three countries as a basis for its theoretical construct.

The first and most pervasive element of the ideological framework constructed by Hanoi is the argument that Indochinese cooperation is necessary because the enemies of the three countries have always considered them a single unit. While this argument is routinely used to explain the need for Indochinese cooperation, Vietnamese media rarely discuss it in detail. An article by Nguyen Tran Dat in the March–April 1985 issue of *Giao Duc Ly Luan*, the journal of the Propaganda and Training Department of the Vietnamese Communist Party, however, was an exception. Dat contended that "historical facts" over the past twelve centuries prove that because Indochina's enemies, driven by the "strategic position" of the three countries and their "rich natural resources," have always practiced a "divide and rule" strategy in their efforts to conquer Indochina, "each country cannot win a complete victory," without the combined strength of an Indochinese "alliance" (Dat, pp. 90–96).

The second element of the framework claims that the "alliance" of the three countries is designed to serve the "common interests" of each nation and of the world. Expounding on this theme, Dat, for example, pointed to Vietnamese efforts to aid Laos and Cambodia in their "anti-U.S. struggle," noting that Vietnamese assistance helped "develop the revolutionary momentum" in those countries, which in turn created the "necessary conditions" for Vietnam to liberate the south. Giving the alliance even broader significance, Dat argued that it is a manifestation of the "law of the proletarian class winning victory on a worldwide scale."

The third element of the framework—an emphasis on the independent status of each nation within the alliance—has received more emphasis in recent years as Hanoi has developed the trilateral relationship. Dat's article, for example, provided an unusually detailed discussion of Vietnamese thinking on this issue. The article took pains to counter the notion that the development of a close trilateral relationship and the stress on the commonality among the three countries implies the formation of an Indochina Federation. Dat argued that Vietnam has always distinguished the common "international mission" of the three countries from the sovereign right of each nation to decide on the resolution of its individual "national problem." To prove his point, Dat marshalled evidence from past party policies as well as from Marxist theory. He noted that the Sixth Plenum of November 1939 had stated that the "alliance of Indochinese need not form a single nation, for the peoples of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos have been independent." This view, he stressed, was later reaffirmed at the party's Eighth Plenum in May 1941 when the conclave decided to drop the slogan of a "Union of Socialist Indochinese Soviet Republics." While the plenum, Dat noted, did not rule out the possibility that the three nations could form a "union of democratic republics," he indicated that the meeting stressed that the "stronger communal government did not have the right to force smaller nations to obey its policies and participate in its government." Dat noted that as the Vietnamese party matured it increasingly has stressed the national identity and independence of each country, realizing—as Friedrich Engels taught—that without the development of separate "independent and unified nations" it would be impossible to achieve "the international alliance of the proletarian class." The party now advocates "holding high the flag of national independence and resolving the national question in the framework of each nation" (Dat, pp. 93–95).

Hanoi also has drawn from past policies to provide a justification for the final element of its ideological framework, the leading role of Vietnam in fostering the trilateral relationship. The Dat article pointed again to the pronouncements of the Eighth Plenum of May 1941, noting that the meeting had stressed that the "Vietnamese people have the obligation of guiding and assisting the people of Cambodia and Laos and the ethnic minority people in Indochina in the struggle for freedom and independence." Vietnam's leading role, Dat suggested, resulted from "specific historical circumstances" that caused the uneven development of the revolution in the three countries (Dat, p. 95).

Goals for Economic Cooperation

Until recently Hanoi has appeared reluctant to define the parameters of the trilateral economic relationship among the three countries, preferring instead to stress the general need for greater cooperation or to take note of specific projects. However, two articles in *Ngoai Thuong*, the monthly publication of the Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Trade, have provided unusually detailed discussions of what Hanoi envisions as the future economic relationship among the three countries.

Claiming to offer "initial thoughts" on the question of trilateral economic cooperation, the first of these articles, one by Truong Son, made it clear that the main goal of Hanoi's policy is to formulate a "common strategy" for the socioeconomic development of Indochina that will allow each nation to "develop its capabilities" (Son, p. 95). According to Son, this strategy would include coordination of economic plans, setting minimal educational and living standards for Indochina, formulating a common economic management system and a common policy for foreign economic relations, and establishing a "general outline of production force distribution and development aimed at most effectively using the labor and resources of each country and within each territorial region" (Son, p. 98). Son noted that while in some cases the principles of the socialist division of labor would apply, in others each country would continue to supply its own needs.

The second article is by Nguyen Thanh Long. This article similarly stressed the need for the three countries to develop and expand their "total cooperative relations," calling it an "objective demand for the existence and development of each country and of the group" (Long, p. 53). The article stated that this cooperation must be "efficient and economically effective," must respect the "legitimate interests" of each nation, and must be "proportionate and beneficial" (Long, p. 59). The Long article suggested that to accomplish this goal, Hanoi envisions a four-part plan that includes labor cooperation (supplying workers for construction or operation purposes and consignment processing), scientific and technical cooperation (training of professional, scientific, and technical cadres, joint research projects, and the provision of specialists), production cooperation (cooperation in construction of projects, exploitation of natural resources, and processing of these products), and the exchange of goods—both at the central level and locally through the "twining" program.

Obstacles to Cooperation

Although Hanoi has made some progress in fostering a trilateral relationship, the process has not been easy. Vietnamese efforts to develop bilateral-level contacts have often conflicted with nationalistic tendencies in Laos and Cambodia. The Vietnamese troop presence in Cambodia has been a particular irritant over the years. Cambodian leaders sporadically find it necessary to warn against "enemy schemes" that seek to break the "international solidarity" between Vietnam and Cambodia. There have been infrequent references in the Laotian media to a "Resolution 33" on Laotian–Vietnamese relations, suggesting that Vientiane also finds it necessary occasionally to point out to the Laotian public the importance of the relationship with Vietnam. Even the communique issued following the Indochinese summit stressed the importance of trilateralism by calling on the three countries to guard against manifestations of "narrow-minded nationalism" that might jeopardize the relationship ("Indochinese Summit Statement," p. I/7).

Hanoi has also had problems explaining its Indochinese policy to its own people. The Vietnamese media have routinely emphasized the need for cadres and soldiers to understand the importance of service in Laos and Cambodia. For example, an article in the December 1983 issue of the party journal typically admonished cadres about resistance to serving in Laos and Cambodia, warning that "even if they could trade what they are doing for a fortune in gold, there is no higher honor than helping the fraternal peoples of Laos and Kampuchea" (*Tap Chi Cong San*, pp. 8–13). The amount of aid Vietnam gives to its neighbors has also proven to be a source of tension at home.

None of these problems appears to have been serious enough to stop or significantly slow the movement toward an Indochinese relationship. In Cambodia, the populace continues to view the Vietnamese presence as an effective bar to the return of the hated Pol Pot regime. And Hanoi shows no signs that popular dissatisfaction with its Indochina policy has reached alarming proportions or that it feels that the disadvantages of its policy outweighs the benefits. In addition, Vietnamese media treatment of this issue suggests that the Vietnamese leadership is particularly aware of the problems and takes special pains to assuage the nationalistic feelings of its neighbors and to control the behavior of its cadres serving in Laos and Cambodia.

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Vietnam and its Indochinese allies clearly are fostering a comprehensive trilateral economic, military, and political relationship. To date, however, there is no evidence to suggest that Hanoi's ultimate goal is the creation of a unified Indochinese state or "federation" under Vietnamese domination. Instead, the evidence indicates that the "special" Indochinese relationship envisioned by Hanoi consists of three separate and independent nations, which have an unusually close relationship, sharing common goals and policy objectives and cooperating closely in all areas, and whose leaders, officials, and even ordinary citizens are bound together by shared personal friendships, as well as shared goals, experiences, and ideology.

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Alternative Models for Indochina Relationships: A Bleak Prospect

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Indochina today is the cockpit of Southeast Asia. This may appear surprising since the Second Indochina War ended ten years ago with apparent decisiveness and the political and economic dynamism of the region today resides in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Nevertheless, there are reasons for Indochina's crucial role. Vietnam, despite its overall problems, has achieved almost big-power status in conventional military terms. It may be less of a force for communist revolutionary change beyond Indochina's borders than it apparently was in 1976, but one cannot completely close the book on this aspect of Hanoi's character. Finally, both China and the Soviet Union have thrust power and influence into Southeast Asia mainly via Indochina and neighboring Thailand.

Vietnam's actions since 1975 have been the catalyst for the present set of relationships in Indochina. First, Hanoi's conquest of South Vietnam inflicted a decisive defeat on the United States, and this defeat has fundamentally affected American attitudes toward South-

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east Asia. Second, Vietnam has ousted Chinese influence from Indochina and has invited the Soviet Union into the region. Finally, Vietnam invaded and continues to occupy Cambodia.

Regional states and big powers alike have tried to influence Vietnam's actions, but they have had limited success at best. More often, other states have reacted to Vietnamese moves, either in support of or in opposition to Hanoi.

Cambodia as the Key Factor

Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia today is the decisive factor in Indochina's internal and external relationships. As long as this situation remains unchanged, the broader set of relationships will probably remain unchanged also, at least into the 1990s. The other actors do not have much incentive to change their policies. They may institute tactical shifts but probably will maintain their present policy goals.

It appears especially important that neither China nor Thailand likely will change their current policies under the current circumstance. China believes that history, geography, and its size give it an inherently paramount external influence in Indochina—which Vietnam now has overthrown. China also views the Cambodia issue as an example of the Soviet Union's global strategy of penetrating Third World countries and establishing "hegemony" in the form of alliance and patron-client relationships. Vietnam plays this role in Southeast Asia, as the Chinese have described it. Beijing also has contended that the Soviet push into Indochina is intended to eliminate Chinese influence and encircle China militarily.

Today, in line with China's emphasis on an "independent foreign policy" and a willingness to explore an improvement of relations with the U.S.S.R., Chinese officials and media statements give less prominence to these themes. Nevertheless, they lie behind China's emphasis on the three obstacles to normalization of relations with the Soviet Union: the presence of Soviet troops on the Chinese border and in Mongolia; the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan; and Soviet backing for Hanoi's occupation of Cambodia.

Beijing is attempting to deal with the Vietnam and Cambodia obstacle first. It reportedly has increased military aid to the Khmer resistance forces since early 1985 when the Vietnamese overran the resistance group's base camps in western Cambodia and is now expanding military support for Thailand by supplying arms, including tanks.

In short, China gives every sign that it is prepared to oppose indefinitely Vietnamese control of Cambodia. Among nation-states, big powers are the least likely to abandon what they view as fundamental interests. As a general rule, they also are less often compelled to give them up, as compared to the smaller powers. China, with centuries of involvement in and long periods of suzerainty over Indochina, particularly fits the dominant pattern.

Thailand views Vietnamese control of Cambodia as a fundamental threat to its security. Attitudes in the Thai government are in large part a reaction to North Vietnam's long involvement with the Thai communist insurgency and other displays of Hanoi's hostility.

Thai policy since the 1950s had supported Laos and Cambodia as buffers separating Thailand from Vietnamese power. Hanoi's takeover of its neighbors in the 1970s undermined this policy. Thailand now appears willing to accept a Vietnamese-dominated Laos or, at least, has refrained from serious steps to undermine Hanoi's control. Thailand's northeast, which borders Laos, is remote from the core of the country, Bangkok and the Thai central plain. The northeast, too, is more resilient to subversion now due to modestly successful political and economic development. Vietnam's control of Cambodia is more threatening to Thailand and creates a greater security problem on its entire eastern border. Also Cambodia lies closer than Laos to Bangkok and Thailand's core region.

Thailand appears determined to push the Vietnamese out of Cambodia and restore Cambodia as a buffer. In the meantime, the Thai government seems to view the Khmer resistance groups as constituting a kind of buffer, thus making the current situation in Cambodia and along the Thai–Cambodian border preferable to a consolidation of Vietnamese control over Cambodia.

Thailand has gained the support of China and the United States against Vietnam; this provides security and sustainability for its policy. While there is some domestic criticism of the government's policy, it has had little impact on the political elite or the general public.

The U.S. policy of low-level support for the opponents of Vietnamese domination of Cambodia has bipartisan support in Washington, and there is no public outcry against it. The policy re-enforces American ties with China—a high priority in U.S. foreign policy—and bolsters ASEAN's unity in its Cambodia policy. The Vietnamese government itself has little credibility with the U.S. government or public because of its repressiveness at home, its outright military invasion and occupation of Cambodia, its military ties with the Soviet Union, and its attitude toward the issue of U.S. servicemen missing in action during the Vietnam War.

Washington has upgraded its contacts with Vietnam, as Hanoi has been willing to negotiate on the missing-in-action question, and further expansion of contacts is possible. However, the United States is not likely to abandon its policy on Cambodia, including the stipulation that normalization of U.S.–Vietnamese relations depends on a Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia.

As long as China and the United States continue to oppose Hanoi, Japan, Western Europe, Australia, and other segments of the international community likely will follow suit. International opposition to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan no doubt has strengthened opposition to Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia in the United Nations and other international bodies.

Australia attempted an independent approach on Cambodia in 1984 and 1985 after the Labor government took power in Canberra by offering itself as a broker between Vietnam and its opponents. The policy floundered, however, because of Vietnamese intransigence and the unwillingness of China and Thailand to budge from their position that Hanoi must agree to withdraw from Cambodia. Indonesia also has tried to adopt the role of honest broker in its many dialogues with Vietnam but has achieved little so far. Indonesian Foreign Ministry officials have acknowledged the difficulty of getting Vietnam to conceive a Cambodian settlement that is not simply a ratification of its domination.

Chinese and Soviet Variables

If Vietnamese policy toward Cambodia constitutes the key factor influencing Indochina's present and future relationships, Chinese and Soviet policies could be important variables in affecting those relationships. China, as stated previously, is not likely to abandon its emphasis on getting Vietnam out of Cambodia. Soviet policies, however, appear to have a greater potential for change. In its foreign policy, the involvement of the Soviet Union in Vietnam today is important as a projection of Soviet global power and ideology, not because foreign policy of the Soviet Union is at issue. In fact, the role of the Soviet Union in Vietnam is an obstacle to its efforts to woo China, Japan, and ASEAN states.

One should not underestimate the importance of global power and ideology in Soviet perceptions. Both have important constituencies in the Soviet Communist Party and the armed forces. Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev has indicated that he will place greater emphasis on a negotiated settlement of the Cambodian conflict. However, he has not indicated any deviation from Vietnam's objective of a settlement that would leave the pro-Hanoi, Khmer communist government in the commanding position. The Soviet government under Gorbachev reportedly has increased military and economic aid to Vietnam. Such action has as much chance of influencing Vietnam to change its Cambodian policy as the United States' continuation of its multi-billion dollar aid program to Israel has of influencing that country to contemplate withdrawal from occupied Arab territories.

Afghanistan could prove to be the catalyst for Moscow to alter its policy toward Vietnam. Moscow's strategy on Afghanistan contains elements similar to Hanoi's strategy on Cambodia. If Gorbachev makes the break and disengages the Soviet Union from Afghanistan, Vietnam no doubt would feel more pressure to extricate itself from Cambodia, and Moscow might even add direct pressure. In short, for Vietnam's opponents, the road to Phnom Penh now may lead through Kabul.

Cambodia Alternatives

Four alternatives are envisaged: a consolidation of Vietnamese control, an escalated insurgency, a genuinely neutral Cambodia, probably under Prince Norodom Sihanouk, and a defacto partition. These are discussed one by one.

Consolidation of Vietnamese Control

The main features of the consolidation of Vietnamese control over Cambodia would be the collapse of the resistance movement and the emergence of a stable, pro-Hanoi Cambodia. Vietnam would continue to define the "special relationship" between Cambodia and Vietnam, and Hanoi would control defense and foreign policy and likely would keep some troops in Cambodia—though fewer than the estimated 140,000 to 170,000 there at present. Cambodia's military forces would be larger than they are now, but Vietnam would impose limits on the nation's military strength in order to forestall any attempt it might make to gain more independence. Vietnamese advisers would remain attached to the Phnom Penh government, army, and communist party. Vietnam would stress the integration of the two economies. In short, Vietnam's role would be less overt but still dominant.

Inside Cambodia, the Phnom Penh regime would increase its control over the population, probably instituting measures similar to the internal policies of the Hanoi regime. Given current circumstances in Vietnam, these could include collectivization of agriculture, resettlement schemes, the broadening of the communist party's organizational apparatus, and the utilization on a larger scale of "re-education" camps. The result could be greater institutional repression than currently exists.

Several developments could bring about this scenario. Prince Sihanouk might accept Vietnam's overtures and become the powerless figurehead of the current Phnom Penh regime. He has done equally unpredictable things in the past. Vietnam could woo the bulk of the Khmer Rouge, minus its top leaders, into a merger with Phnom Penh's communist party. The resistance then might collapse. Thailand could inflict a mortal wound on the resistance groups by ending aid and sanctuary. Over the long term, Vietnam just might succeed in building up a viable client regime.

An Escalated Insurgency

A major escalation of the Khmer insurgency into the early 1990s still does not seem likely, but chances for it are not as remote as they were during the Vietnamese offensive of 1983–1984 or in early 1985 immediately after the Vietnamese destroyed the border camps of the Khmer Rouge, the Khmer People's National Liberation Front, and the *Armée Nationale Sihanoukienne* (A.N.S.), the military arm of the National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia (FUNCIPEC). A more intense insurgency would be on the scale of the Afghan insurgency and the Vietcong insurgency of the mid-1960s in South Vietnam. The resistance groups would have most of their forces inside Cambodia, would operate throughout the country, and would have extensive access to the villages. The size of the resistance armies would rise above present levels through successful recruitment in the villages and defections from the Phnom Penh army. Resistance forces would possess a more potent variety of weapons, especially mortars and antiaircraft missiles.

Several developments could bring about an expanded insurgency. Khmer nationalism could surge and take a strong anti-Vietnam tone. One or both of the non-communist groups could achieve a viable guerrilla presence inside Cambodia and thus encourage the United States to extend aid on a meaningful scale. Mounting U.S. assistance to the Afghan guerrillas offers a potential parallel. The level of Chinese arms aid could continue upwards. Continued weaknesses of the Phnom Penh regime could help create an atmosphere conducive to an insurgent build up.

Guerrilla insurgencies in the post-World War II period have had long life spans. An expanding Khmer insurgency could continue well into the 1990s unless Vietnam decided to withdraw and make the best deal possible. On the other hand, Vietnam might commit more troops or better quality units. China might act to limit this by increasing military pressure on Vietnam's northern border. The level of fighting inside Cambodia and the disruption of civilian society would rise.

A Neutral Cambodia

If Cambodia became genuinely neutral—probably under Sihanouk—Vietnam would agree to a total withdrawal, although it might retain rights to maintain small garrisons at key points on the Cambodia–Vietnam border. Khmer Rouge leaders would go into exile in China, and many of Phnom Penh's present leaders would go into exile in Vietnam. An international force or a combined Vietnamese–ASEAN force would disarm the Khmer Rouge and the Phnom Penh armies.

A neutral government probably would have to abide by certain restrictions as insurance to Vietnam. These could include a limitation on the size of its armed forces, a prohibition on entering military alliances with any third party (i.e., China), settlement of territorial disputes with Vietnam (most likely on Hanoi's terms), the right of Vietnam to veto Cambodia's joining ASEAN, and perhaps special economic ties. Thus, neutrality probably would have elements of what is commonly known as Finlandization.

A neutral Cambodia constitutes the ultimate objective of ASEAN's policy. Thailand and the other ASEAN members most likely could accept neutralization with the Finlandization measures cited above. Vietnam currently rejects this formula but one day might find it more acceptable than a settlement that would allow a pro-China, Khmer Rouge movement to continue. China's attitude would be more uncertain, but its support for such a formula appears possible now.

A Defacto Partition of Cambodia

A defacto partition of Cambodia would be the outcome of a settlement that the parties did not implement fully. A three- or four-party coalition government would reside in Phnom Penh, but its writ would extend only to the regions around the capital. Its authority might be based on an international peace-keeping force stationed in this region.

Vietnam and the present Phnom Penh regime would have military control and real governmental authority over eastern Cambodia. The Mekong River would demarcate most of Hanoi's sphere. Non-communist forces backed by Thailand and perhaps the Khmer Rouge would control western Cambodia, probably the area west of Tonle Sap Lake.

ASEAN governments have proposed on several occasions that Vietnam withdraw its occupation army in stages. If this proposal was accepted, the stages of withdrawal undoubtedly would be from west to east. At each stage, the parties to an agreement would have to implement other provisions of an accord. If Vietnam balked at implementation at a certain stage, or if one of the other parties pushed for advantages beyond those specified, a protracted, de facto partition could emerge. It would be messy and would lead to constant instability and conflict. Nevertheless, it could last for a long period. Laos's de facto partition during the late 1950s and the 1960s and the phenomenon of "warlordism" in other countries provides some examples.

Indochina–ASEAN Alternatives

Vietnam's future policies toward ASEAN focus on the question of whether Vietnam will adopt a policy of real coexistence with the ASEAN states or whether it instead will attempt to force political change in these states through military pressure, subversion, and intimidation. (Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand are the members of ASEAN.) Vietnamese policies have contained several tenets which, if continued, undoubtedly would result in the latter scenario. These are Hanoi's criticism of the social and economic systems of the ASEAN members, including ASEAN's ties with "international capitalism;" the trend toward hostility to and confrontation with Thailand, which pre-dates 1975; opposition to ASEAN security ties with the United States; and efforts to undermine the unity of ASEAN. These tenets have been re-enforced by Vietnam's view of itself as a force for revolutionary change in Southeast Asia and its ties with the Soviet Union.

Other attitudes may suggest a basis for a more cooperative relationship with ASEAN. One is Vietnam's fear of China. Vietnam has proposed cooperation among Southeast Asian nations against China. Indonesia, at least, finds Vietnam's offer credible. Hanoi also has spoken of Indochina and ASEAN as two entities that could cooperate, and it professes interest in the neutralization of the region.

Moreover, the quagmire in Cambodia and the internal economic malaise might drain some of the revolutionary ardor and ideological hostility out of Vietnam for a time, especially if the Hanoi regime adopts pragmatic economic policies over the next two to three years similar to those now in place in China.

The Soviet Union will have a strong influence on Vietnam's policies toward the ASEAN members. Today Vietnam has less flexibility in its relations with ASEAN members owing to its dependence on the Soviet Union. Unless it can reduce that dependence, Vietnam will have to follow policies in Southeast Asia that parallel Soviet policies. Hanoi still can initiate actions, but it cannot sustain them without Moscow's approval.

There are three possible alternative Indochina–ASEAN relationships: one characterized by intensified conflict over Cambodia; another by a Vietnamese policy of confrontation and destabilization against ASEAN; and a third based on coexistence.

Intensified Conflict Over Cambodia

The Cambodian conflict has resulted in the creation of a web of constraints on Vietnamese military action against Thailand, including the operations of the resistance forces, Chinese military pressure on Vietnam's northern border, and increased U.S. security support for Thailand. Nevertheless, Vietnam has the option of escalating the conflict with Thailand as the target. Vietnam could launch multibattalion strikes across the Cambodia–Thailand border, with the objectives of eliminating the sanctuaries and sources of supplies for the Khmer resistance; it could force the Thai army into a major battle and compel Thailand to drop its support of the Khmer insurgent groups. The basis for such moves already exists in the emphasis of the Vietnamese military on conventional military operations. It enjoyed success with this strategy in the invasions of South Vietnam in 1975 and Cambodia in 1979 and the offensive against the resistance group's border camps in 1985.

Vietnamese military strikes into Thailand would carry with them the danger of a full-scale border war between Vietnam and Thailand, with the possibility of further escalation and outside intervention. China no doubt would react militarily, either directly across Vietnam's northern border or against Laos. The United States would rush arms to Thailand and might even intervene with air and sea forces. Malaysia and Singapore might offer token military support.

Vietnamese military strikes would deepen hostility between ASEAN and Vietnam even after military operations ceased. The Thai–Chinese relationship would become more intimate, and chances of a Cambodian settlement would dwindle unless Thailand capitulated—an unlikely prospect if Thailand's big-power patrons intervened. Hanoi could achieve success, however, by destroying the infrastructure of the resistance groups inside Thailand. At the least, this would buy Vietnam time in its program to build up its client regime in Phnom Penh. Unquestionably, Soviet support for cross-border attacks would result in a further deepening of Soviet influence on Vietnam.

Confrontation with ASEAN

Under a policy of confrontation with destabilization of ASEAN, Vietnam would re-emphasize its approach to ASEAN since 1975: weakening ASEAN unity, influencing changes in the political-ideological orientations of ASEAN countries, and backing leftist subversive movements in ASEAN countries. Such a policy no doubt would be coordinated with parallel Soviet moves.

Vietnam could act generally to up the ante for coexistence by demanding that ASEAN countries cut their links with "international capitalism," eliminate security ties with the United States, and forge closer relations with the Soviet Union and its allies. Vietnam also could attempt anew to isolate the ASEAN members of the nonaligned movement and renew attacks on the legitimacy of ASEAN as an organization. Or it could act more selectively, looking for targets of opportunity and adjusting its strategy accordingly, perhaps focusing on the destabilization of certain countries through military pressure and/or subversion. Within ASEAN, Thailand and the Philippines offer potential targets.

Hanoi would have several options with regard to Thailand. For example, Laos and Cambodia could intensify their long-standing territorial disputes with Thailand. Or Vietnam could upgrade its program to establish a new pro-Hanoi, Thai communist insurgency in the northeast. Vietnam also could foster a Laotian irredentist movement aimed at the ethnically similar Thais of the northeast. If this and renewed insurgency created instability in the northeast, Vietnam would have a foundation for direct military intervention—perhaps with surrogate Pathet Lao forces.

The Philippines too might be a target for subversion. It is uncertain at this time whether or not Filipino communist insurgents have turned to the Soviet bloc for arms and other material support. Reports, including testimony from Filipino communist leaders, assert that the Soviets have offered aid in the recent past. Even if the Communist Party of the Philippines has turned down such offers, its position soon could change. In view of recent political setbacks at the hands of the Aquino government and the insurgency's chronic deficiencies in internal resources, the Communist Party of the Philippines faces the task of shifting its strategy. The time may be ripe for the communists to turn to Moscow and its allies.

Vietnam would probably be a chief conduit of Soviet aid to the Filipino communist insurgency. The South China Sea would offer a route for Soviet arms and other supplies to flow from Vietnam to the Philippines. Vietnam could also assist Libya in aiding Muslim rebels in the southern Philippines if that rebellion were to resume on a wide scale.

Vietnamese–ASEAN Coexistence

Vietnamese–ASEAN coexistence would most likely come about after the Cambodia conflict was settled and Cambodia removed as a source of day-to-day hostility between Hanoi and the ASEAN governments. Though Vietnam would still be subject to Soviet influence, it would have more latitude to determine its own approach toward the ASEAN states. Destabilization would continue to be an option for Vietnam, but the nation would also have the opportunity to establish a relationship of coexistence similar to that which existed in Europe in the 1960s and 1970s. Vietnam and ASEAN could work toward such a relationship through emphasis on economic agreements, trade, and initiatives to revive the Mekong River development and a willingness to recognize and negotiate with ASEAN over issues such as the neutralization of Southeast Asia and the role of China and the other major powers. Given Vietnam's military superiority over the ASEAN states, Hanoi could undertake military-related actions to reassure the ASEAN members, including a pullback from the Thai border, a partial demobilization, and a lowering of the Soviet military presence in Indochina. Such moves would enhance conditions for ASEAN acceptance of Vietnam's long-standing offers of nonaggression pacts. It should be stated, however, that these military moves would probably take place in the context of a Vietnamese–Chinese accommodation.

Indochina–Big Power Alternatives

If the outcome in Cambodia is the key to Vietnam's developing alternative relationships with the ASEAN states, China no doubt is the door through which Vietnam must pass in order to change its relations with the big powers. Vietnam's fundamental enmity with China has been the determinant of its relations with the Soviet Union and the United States since 1977. If that enmity persists, there is little chance of broader change. Hanoi will still require Soviet military support, and the United States will not jeopardize its China policy by normalizing relations with Vietnam against Beijing's wishes.

As with most big power-small power relationships, Vietnam likely will have to do most of the accommodating. The first step would be for Vietnam to withdraw from Cambodia in exchange for a settlement offering Vietnam guarantees of constraints on future Chinese policies toward the Indochina states.

There appear to be two alternatives to the present set of relationships. One is for Vietnam to move to a more equidistant position between China and the Soviet Union. A second is for Vietnam to move even closer to Moscow and fully support Soviet strategic goals in the region of Southeast Asia.

Vietnam in an Even-Handed Position

To move to a more equidistant position between China and the Soviet Union, Vietnam would have to start with a Cambodian settlement. But other measures would also be required, such as a mutual military pullback from the Sino–Vietnamese border, the signing of a non-aggression pact, Chinese guarantees concerning Laos, and the settlement of offshore territorial disputes. These measures would give Hanoi more flexibility in dealing with the Soviet Union and the United States.

Hanoi could move further by imposing strict limits on Moscow's military presence, leading to an eventual Soviet military withdrawal. This undoubtedly would require a substantial reduction in the size of Vietnam's bloated army, the main consumer of Soviet aid. It could come about through a decision by Vietnam to improve relations with ASEAN and forge an initiative with ASEAN for a simultaneous Soviet and American withdrawal from military bases in Southeast Asia.

It is probable that a settlement in Cambodia satisfactory to ASEAN and China would prompt the United States and Japan to end current sanctions against Vietnam, including trade and aid embargoes. In time this could ease Vietnam's economic dependence on the

U.S.S.R. Japan would be the key, for it probably would offer more substantial trade and aid programs than would the United States.

In another version of this scenario, the Soviet Union would reduce its support for Vietnam and would pressure it to accommodate on Cambodia and with China. Moscow would adopt this course, seeking to optimize gains from diplomatic overtures to China and ASEAN. Moscow undoubtedly would try to do this without losing its bases, but it would lose leverage on Vietnam. Moreover, Vietnam probably would discover that China would be unlikely to enter into lasting detente with Vietnam so long as Soviet bases remain on Vietnamese soil.

Closer Military Ties with the Soviet Union

The Soviets already have established an air and naval combat capability in Vietnam, consisting of attack submarines, MIG-23 fighters, and Badger bombers. To forge closer military ties with the Soviet Union, Vietnam would allow the U.S.S.R. to build up its military presence into a multiple, offensive-capable force that could threaten American bases in the Philippines, Guam, and Okinawa. Moscow would deploy a much larger contingent of attack submarines out of Camranh Bay. Backfire bombers and SU-24 long-range fighter bombers would replace a considerable number of the aging Badgers.

Several developments could prompt closer Vietnam–U.S.S.R. ties. China might attack across the Vietnamese border in force, leading Vietnam to ask for further Soviet support. Moscow in turn would demand the right to build up its forces in Vietnam in exchange for its support. If the United States were ousted from its bases in the Philippines, Moscow might seek a strategic build up in Vietnam, and Vietnam might grant it, viewing a U.S. ouster as an opportunity to extend its own influence in Southeast Asia and fearing an even more active Chinese policy in the region as a result of the American withdrawal.

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Indochina's relationships today are conflictual or outgrowths of conflicts. Many of the alternatives described above are merely new stages of the existing conflicts. True, there are alternatives which would lead

Indochina away from conflict. Nevertheless, the reality of today and the bleaker alternatives described above give cause for little optimism as Indochina and Southeast Asia move into the 1990s. Vietnam has doors leading to better relations with its neighbors, but it may be too immobilized by its past to pass through them.

Part Two

EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS of the INDOCHINA STATES

7.

The Soviet–Vietnamese Alliance

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The Soviet–Vietnamese alliance is the product of three deeply-rooted conflicts: the global superpower conflict between Moscow and Washington, the Sino–Soviet rivalry in the Far East, and the Sino–Vietnamese struggle in Indochina. The first two rivalries have long provided the Soviet Union with strong incentives for obtaining military bases and political influence in Southeast Asia to project its power against two major adversaries—the United States and China. The Soviets initially tried to advance their influence in Southeast Asia by establishing a military and economic aid relationship with Sukarno's Indonesia in the 1960s. But these efforts to project Soviet power into the strategic waterways of Southeast Asia collapsed when the Indonesian military crushed the communists, got rid of Sukarno, and took power in 1965.

In the aftermath of their failure in Djakarta, the Soviets immediately turned their attention to Vietnam. By providing military, economic, and diplomatic support to Hanoi in its struggle with the United States during the 1960s and 1970s, Moscow positioned itself for the strategic breakthrough that came in 1978 as a result of the third deeply-rooted rivalry—that between Hanoi and Beijing.

The immediate cause of the Sino–Vietnamese conflict that erupted in 1978 was Hanoi's decision in that year to abandon its balanced position in the Sino–Soviet dispute and to come down unequivocally on the side of Moscow; to join the Moscow-based economic organization known as COMECON or C.M.E.A. (Council for Mutual Economic

Assistance); and to establish a strategic agreement with Moscow within the framework of a network of so-called friendship treaties that Moscow had built throughout Asia and Africa. The Vietnamese did all of this, no doubt, because they needed Soviet support against China in their planned invasion of Cambodia, which took place on December 25, 1978, a month after they signed the friendship treaty with Moscow.

From their own strategic point of view, the Vietnamese must have considered that they had good reasons for overthrowing Pol Pot and installing their own puppet government in Cambodia; however, no Chinese government of whatever ideological complexion could have accepted this action. For Beijing, this action represented not only a forcible overthrow of a neighboring client state, but also collusion with a Soviet adversary that was systematically setting out to encircle China with military power.

In sum, the Soviet–Vietnamese alliance is the product of a complex set of power rivalries that provide both the Soviets and the Vietnamese with very strong incentives to embrace each other. Each side benefits very considerably. The Soviets obtain access to military bases in Vietnam so that for the first time in Russian history the Soviet Union has become a major player in Southeast Asia, the western Pacific, and the Indian Ocean. The Vietnamese obtain an insurance policy against China and any other combination of powers determined to roll back Vietnam's newly acquired and long-sought empire in Indochina. And the Vietnamese acquire substantial amounts of diplomatic, economic, and military assistance that they could get nowhere else at a time of deep diplomatic isolation and enormous economic and social strains.

It is unlikely that there will be any major changes in the Soviet–Vietnamese alliance unless there are some major breakthroughs in the three-power rivalries. Let us briefly examine each of these rivalries and their impact on Soviet–Vietnamese relations.

Soviet–American Competition in Asia

Although the Soviet Union and the United States are now entering a period when they both seem to want some respite from their intense confrontation in recent years, it is difficult to believe that there will be any substantial accommodation between the superpowers. They are deeply divided by an ideological contest and by a global competition for power and influence.

The Soviet Union is a rising, expansionist power dissatisfied with the present distribution of power in nearly all of the regions of the world. The Soviet–American rivalry is a classic confrontation between a great land power and an even greater sea power. By its transoceanic alliances and network of bases in Europe and the Far East, the sea power encircles the land power in an effort to contain it and thereby reinforces the land power's historically-rooted fears of having to fight a two-front war. The land power thus seeks to cut the ties of the sea power at both ends of the Eurasian continent—to split the United States from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and from its Far Eastern friends and allies as well. Were the Soviet Union to succeed in this endeavor, it would tilt the balance of global power significantly in its favor. The United States cannot allow this to happen and hence seeks to strengthen its transoceanic alliances and the naval and air power on which the credibility of those alliances depends. Thus, whatever accords on arms or reductions of tension that the two powers agree to, the global rivalry will certainly continue. Particularly in the Far East the military and political rivalry between the two superpowers is likely to intensify as the global strategic center of gravity moves from Europe to Asia.

The United States is well on the way towards establishing a 600-ship navy and is adding several new carrier task forces to its fleet. The Seventh Fleet has been equipped with Tomahawk cruise missiles, some of them nuclear-capable; the U.S.S. *Carl Vinson*, a nuclear-powered attack carrier, and the U.S.S. *New Jersey*, a battleship retrofitted with cruise missiles, have also been added to the U.S. Pacific Fleet; two additional squadrons of F-16s are now based on Japanese territory; and a new battleship group, led by the U.S.S. *Missouri*, has greatly increased American surface strength.

The Soviet Union, meanwhile, continues to upgrade its own land, naval, and air forces in the Far East. The Soviet Pacific Fleet is already the largest of Moscow's four fleets, and sometime in the 1990s it will have its first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier capable of carrying catapulted aircraft. By adding substantial numbers of Backfire bombers to those stationed in the Far East, the Soviets are able to control portions of the ocean close to their own border. Access to

Vietnamese military facilities, and particularly to Camranh Bay, greatly strengthens the Soviet position in this historic rivalry with the United States. It gives the Soviets warm-water ports and repair and storage facilities midway between Vladivostok and the Indian Ocean and makes it possible for them to maintain a more or less permanent naval presence in the South China Sea and an intelligence collecting center for long-range spy planes.

From the Soviet point of view, the Far East is a theater of growing strategic importance in which its own political influence lags substantially behind that of the United States. Indeed, the gap between Soviet military power and political influence is greater in the Far East than in any other region of the world. Under Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone, Japan has moved closer to the American alliance, and Nakasone has even called Japan an unsinkable American aircraft carrier. China, while professing a policy of independence and moving to reduce tensions with the Soviet Union, has recently allowed the United States Navy to make a port call at Qingdao, has engaged in periodic strategic consultations with high-ranking American military leaders, and is entering into a web of close economic relations with the entire Western world. In Southeast Asia, apart from Indochina, Soviet influence has never been significant, and the Soviet-supported Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia plus the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan have made the countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) even more suspicious of Soviet intentions.

The new Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, is determined to change this unfavorable situation in Asia as signalled by his famous speech of July 28, 1986, in Vladivostok. Recognizing that past Soviet policy in the Far East has been counter-productive, Gorbachev hopes to improve relations with China, Japan, and ASEAN—thereby increasing the distance between those countries and the United States. So far, however, he has been unwilling or unable to make the kinds of concessions that are needed to make substantial breakthroughs with any of them.

The Significance of the U.S.–Soviet Rivalry for Vietnam

What is the significance of this continuing superpower strategic rivalry in the Pacific for the future of Soviet–Vietnamese relations? The main point, I believe, is that the Russians—with so few friends or allies in the region—are unlikely to jeopardize their military facilities in Vietnam by doing anything that would seriously alienate the leaders in Hanoi. Moscow is likely to pay almost any price the Vietnamese insist upon in order to continue maintaining Soviet military facilities in Vietnam. In this respect, the Soviet position in Vietnam is somewhat similar to the U.S. position in the Philippines. Were either superpower forced out of its bases in Southeast Asia, the strategic environment in the Pacific could change radically in favor of the other. Both superpowers will therefore pay a lot to maintain their present positions. That is why it should not be surprising that the Soviet Union recently doubled the aid earmarked for Vietnam during the coming five-year plan period. Soviet military and economic aid to Vietnam has been steadily rising since 1978.

Improved Relations between China and the U.S.S.R.—What It Means for Vietnam

Let us now turn to the Sino–Soviet rivalry and its impact on Soviet–Vietnamese relations. There has been a substantial reduction of tensions between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China in recent years and a substantial increase in their economic and cultural relations. Improving relations with China is clearly the centerpiece of Gorbachev's Vladivostok initiative. He has offered a new compromise formula on the long-stalled border talks, pulled out a division of troops from Outer Mongolia, offered to cooperate with China in space exploration, called for discussion with the Chinese government on reducing land forces on the border, and suggested a variety of cooperative economic projects.

Perhaps even more important, in an effort to improve relations with China, Gorbachev has shown some willingness to distance the Soviet Union slightly from both India and Vietnam, China's two Asian adversaries. In recent appearances in New Delhi, Gorbachev was extremely ambiguous and vague when pressed by Indian reporters on what the Soviet Union would do in the event of another conflict between China and India. Moreover, in order to appease

China, the Soviets have been making an effort to get the Vietnamese to soften their position on Cambodia.

Gorbachev's efforts to improve relations with China are motivated by several considerations. Although the Soviet Union has no illusions that a 1950s-type alliance with the People's Republic will be possible in the future, Moscow does see an opportunity to exploit the new independent foreign policy that has been enunciated by the Chinese leadership since 1982. And the Soviets are encouraged by China's efforts to move towards the swing position in the strategic triangle rather than to ally with the United States against the Soviet Union.

The Soviets are also encouraged by China's evident willingness to improve economic and cultural relations with the Soviet Union despite the lack of improvement in strategic areas. And some Soviet writers seem to have the ideologically-motivated view that since both China and the Soviet Union are socialist countries, this will provide the basis for some degree of cooperation against the "imperialist" world.

Prospects for a Breakthrough in Sino–Soviet Relations

Since 1982, there has been a gradual improvement in Sino–Soviet relations.

- Tensions along the border have been much reduced and border talks have been resumed.
- The two countries are much less critical of each other's foreign policies, and the level of polemics is down substantially from the days when China called Russia "social imperialists" and the Russians called the Chinese "Han chauvinists."
- The two sides have begun referring to each other as comrades, a word which implies that there are no serious ideological differences between them. Both now give positive assessments of each other's reforms. Indeed, some Chinese writers are once again openly portraying the Soviet economic model as a positive model for China.

- There has been a substantial increase in trade, and the Soviet Union has agreed to provide technical assistance to refurbish a number of factories they built during the 1950s.
- Cultural ties between the two countries have expanded.

In sum, the mid-1960s deep freeze in the relationship has ended; channels of communication have been opened at several levels; mutual polemics have subsided; economic and cultural cooperation has broadened; and there has been a slow but substantial improvement in the relationship.

Strategic and Geopolitical Rivalry

But in contrast to these improvements, the strategic and geopolitical rivalry between Russia and China remains. The Soviets have not substantially cut back their military encirclement of China; nor have they gone very far towards meeting China's three conditions for normalization, which reflect a Chinese demand for a cutback in this encirclement. On the contrary, the Soviet land and air forces opposite China have been qualitatively strengthened and so has the Soviet Pacific Fleet off China's coast.

In addition the Soviets have not gone very far towards meeting other Chinese conditions with regard to Outer Mongolia, Afghanistan, and Cambodia. Moscow has withdrawn only one division of troops from Mongolia, but the Chinese demand a total withdrawal. The Soviets have made a sham withdrawal of a few air defense regiments from Kabul, while the Chinese demand a total Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. Finally, the Soviets have not withdrawn their support for Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia. Rather they have increased their military and economic aid to Vietnam and called the situation in Cambodia "irreversible."

Thus, from Peking's point of view, the Soviet military encirclement of China continues. Moreover, it seems rather unlikely that in the foreseeable future the Soviets will withdraw completely from either Outer Mongolia or Afghanistan or that the Vietnamese will withdraw completely from Cambodia. Outer Mongolia has been a Soviet satellite since the 1920s and it is strategically important for the Soviet

Union in the event of a clash with China. The Mongols do not want the Soviets to withdraw from Mongolia because they are extremely fearful of Chinese irredentism.

A complete Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan would be extremely dangerous under existing conditions. The Soviet-puppet communist government would collapse and a violently anti-Soviet government would probably replace it. Although Moscow now talks like it wants to cut its losses in Afghanistan, it remains doubtful that it is prepared to pay the price of complete withdrawal.

With regard to Cambodia, the Soviets have only a limited ability to influence the Vietnamese, and the Vietnamese are determined to dominate Laos and Cambodia for what they regard as important strategic and geopolitical reasons. The Soviets cannot afford to pull the plug on Vietnam for fear of losing their strategically important bases.

Meanwhile, a fourth new obstacle to Sino–Soviet normalization now looms on the horizon. This has to do with the spread of Soviet military power to North Korea. In recent years, the Soviets have been given permission to overfly North Korean territory and to make naval port calls at North Korean ports in exchange for supplying Pyongyang with modern jet fighter planes and increased economic aid. From Beijing's point of view, this new Soviet–North Korean military relationship further tightens the Soviet noose around China.

In sum, even if there is a normalization of relations between China and the Soviet Union, it will not change certain basic facts in the Sino–Soviet–American triangle.

- The Soviet Union will continue to maintain one-quarter of its land forces and substantial amounts of its nuclear and air forces opposite China.

- The Soviet Union and China will remain potential enemies with a long border and no buffer zones.

- Prejudice and fear will continue to govern Soviet relations with a country which contains the largest population in the world and possesses the will and resources to reclaim its historic greatness.

- Soviet and Chinese interests will continue to clash all over the Asia–Pacific region from Korea to Indochina to South Asia, and, as China becomes stronger, this geopolitical competition will grow.

- China will continue to have much more to fear from the Soviet Union and much more to gain from the United States in terms of its two most important needs—security and development. Chinese–American relations will therefore remain closer than either Sino–Soviet or Soviet–American relations and China, for its own reasons, will remain a massive barrier to further Soviet expansion in Asia.

The upshot of this for Soviet–Vietnamese relations is that, although Moscow will try its best to have both its Chinese and its Vietnamese cake at the same time, it will not be able to. Beijing will force it to choose between Beijing and Hanoi, and, faced with such a choice, it will continue to come down on the side of Hanoi. Moscow would be seriously tempted to abandon Hanoi in favor of Beijing only in the extremely unlikely event that Beijing was willing to make substantial cuts in its strategic and economic ties to the West. Although Moscow dreams of such a possibility, it does not seem likely—particularly since Moscow is not prepared to make the kinds of drastic cutbacks in its own military power and expansion that has pushed China towards the West in the first place.

China and Vietnam: Old Enemies

Let us now turn to the third and perhaps most crucial power rivalry that is at the root of the Soviet–Vietnamese alliance: the Sino–Vietnamese conflict. The depth of this conflict is well illustrated by an anecdote told to me by Roger Hilsman, former director of the Office of Intelligence and Research in the Kennedy Administration, about his recent visit to Hanoi. While touring the Vietnamese military museum, Hilsman expressed some disappointment that there was only half a room devoted to the war with the Americans while there were some fourteen rooms devoted to the Chinese and two or so to the French. Hilsman's Vietnamese interlocutor responded, "The Chinese occupied us for a thousand years and we fought them for another thousand; the French were here for 150 years; you Americans were just a passing episode."

Nayan Chanda, in his superb book, *Brother Enemy*, also provides insight into the historical and geopolitical background of the age-old conflict between China and Vietnam. As Chanda points out, through several centuries before the modern era, China ceaselessly sought to subjugate Vietnam, and Vietnamese efforts to achieve supremacy on China's southern border provoked unremitting opposition from Chinese rulers. The Vietnamese always justified their efforts to extend their tutelage over Cambodia and the principalities of Laos by security considerations, and long before the French established control over Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, the Nguyen emperors were well on their way to doing the same.

There is clear geostrategic logic behind the concerns of both the Vietnamese and the Chinese. For the Vietnamese, as General Vo Nguyen Giap wrote in 1950, Indochina is a single strategic unit, a single battlefield. Vietnam could not be independent and secure if either Cambodia or Laos were under the domination of a hostile power. This geostrategic logic was borne out during the First Indochina War when the French launched major attacks on Vietminh strongholds in Laos and Cambodia. And it was borne out again in the Second Indochina War when the North Vietnamese exploited the Ho Chi Minh trail through Laos and base camps in Cambodia to supply their forces in South Vietnam.

One conclusion to be drawn from this record was the one drawn by the Vietnamese army daily in 1979:

> For more than a century now, history has always linked the destinies of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. When one of them is invaded or annexed, the independence and freedom of the rest are also endangered, making it impossible for them to live in peace. Therefore, the enemy of one country is also the enemy of all three countries. To maintain unity among themselves and to join one another in fighting and winning victories—this is the law for success in the revolutions of the three countries.

In a further elaboration of this theme, the Vietnamese claimed that outside powers, for their part, constantly sought to control all three by creating divisions among them. "In their plots to annex Indochina and expand into Southeast Asia," a Vietnamese general claimed in 1984, "the Peking reactionaries cannot help but follow this law" (Chanda, p. 123).

If the indivisibility of security in all three Indochinese states was one geostrategic conclusion to be drawn by the Vietnamese from their own history, another was the importance of balancing China's power. In the 900 or so years after the invading Song army suffered an ignominious defeat in its attempt to subjugate Vietnam in the tenth century, the Vietnamese fought off a score of invasions from the north. A Vietnamese official was later to sum up the accumulated historical wisdom on this score: "In all of history," he said, "we have been secure from China in only two conditions. One is when China is weak and internally divided. The other is when she has been threatened by barbarians from the north. In the present era, the Russians are our barbarians" (cited by Chanda, p. 135).

For the Vietnamese, then, the appearance of a pro-Chinese Pol Pot in Cambodia in the immediate aftermath of the American departure from Vietnam must have looked like a repetition of an old historical threat. When Pol Pot began to purge Vietnamese-trained cadres from his own communist party and to contest certain areas of the Vietnamese–Cambodian border—all with apparent Chinese support—the leaders in Hanoi decided that they could not afford to wait. To assure their own security in the one indivisible strategic area, they had to subjugate both Cambodia and Laos. And to do this, they had to ally themselves with the Russians.

But if there was an inexorable geostrategic logic behind Vietnam's calculations, there was a similar logic behind Beijing's thinking. China's basic goal throughout its history has been to assure order and stability on its southern border. In its heyday it conceived of itself as an impartial suzerain and only occasionally used its military might to play the gendarme. Rather it preferred that its smaller and less cultured neighbors to the south pay tribute to China and in exchange, when they were squabbling among themselves or offending China, the imperial court would send emissaries to reprimand the offending vassals.

Behind this role of an impartial suzerain lay China's desire for an untroubled south that deferred to China. In modern parlance, we might suggest that China wanted a Finlandized south. The way to get it was to ensure that there existed a balance of power among the smaller states in the region so that no one of them could pose a threat to China's own stability. Thus, there was, as Chanda points out, "a certain inevitability in the Chinese opposition to the Vietnamese bid for hegemony in Indochina." This opposition was certainly reinforced when the Vietnamese allied themselves with the Soviet Union in order to obtain that hegemony. From Beijing's point of view, it was bad enough that Vietnam was seeking to establish an empire on China's southern border—something that any Chinese government would resist. It was intolerable that this empire would be allied with China's main security threat to the north, a country that was already trying to encircle China.

No Quick End to the Conflict over Vietnam

Viewed in this historical and geostrategic context, it is not easy to foresee a quick end to the Chinese–Vietnamese conflict over Indochina. Many Americans, particularly the old Vietnam hands, are too quick to see the present Indochina conflict in terms of America's own experience in Vietnam and to conclude that the Vietnamese will ultimately triumph. It is true that the French and Americans did tire of their protracted conflicts in Indochina and eventually went home. But the Chinese are neither Americans nor French and they are home. The Chinese have the capacity and the staying power to cause a great deal of trouble for Vietnam in its efforts to remain the hegemonic power in Indochina. Together with Thailand, which is also opposed to Vietnamese hegemony in Indochina for solid geostrategic and historical reasons, the Chinese can continue indefinitely to support the Khmer resistance with weapons and materiel. And China can continue to tie down substantial numbers of Vietnamese troops on Hanoi's northern border—thus preventing the Vietnamese from consolidating their empire. Moreover, at a time when the Russians are intent on improving relations with China, the Vietnamese will not be able to count on Soviet support for any aggressive actions in Indochina that might bring Hanoi into a direct military confrontation with the Chinese. If one adds to this picture the fact that the Vietnamese have an economy in shambles, the picture for Hanoi is certainly not a bright one. Indeed, one is tempted to suggest that Vietnam will in the long run have to come to terms with China.

Future Scenarios

If it is true that the Soviet–Vietnamese alliance is the product of the three power rivalries I have described, what are the prospects for its future? Perhaps the most important point to make is that there are virtually no prospects for an end to any of these rivalries in the near future. On the other hand, there is the chance—even the likelihood—that there will be some lessening of tension in all three rivalries. Sino–Soviet relations are improving to a considerable degree; the Americans and the Russians may be heading for some new arms control agreements; and the Vietnamese—no doubt under some pressure from Moscow—are holding out an olive branch to China.

Still, when all is said and done, it is difficult to imagine that reduced tension will influence the Soviet–Vietnamese relationship to any substantial degree. Because of its rivalry with Washington and Beijing, Moscow will continue to have a strong interest in its new forward base in Vietnam. And Hanoi, because of its deep and obsessive fear of China, will continue to have no real alternative to dependence on the Russians.

In the long run, however, several different scenarios could radically alter the present pattern of Soviet–Vietnamese relations.

First, the Soviet Union could accept China's condition for normalization of relations and agree to greatly reduce its support for Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia. But the Soviet Union would be unlikely to undertake such a drastic action unless there was a substantial reason to expect a serious deterioration in China's relations with the West and an equally substantial breakthrough in Sino–Soviet relations.

Second, Vietnam could make peace with China and agree with Beijing on a mutually satisfactory solution to the question of who governs in Phnom Penh. A settlement with China, ASEAN, and the United States would then follow. Were this to happen, Vietnam would probably initiate a substantial readjustment of its relations with the Russians and move towards a more balanced position between Moscow, Peking, and the West.

Third, fighting between China and Vietnam could intensify and the Soviet Union could be forced to throw its weight on one side or the other. If Moscow were to choose Beijing, this might drive Hanoi closer to the West. If Moscow were to continue to choose Hanoi, this would drive China even closer to the West. It should be recalled in this context that it was Moscow's neutrality in the Sino–Indian border conflict of 1959 that was one of the contributing factors in the Sino–Soviet split and the Soviet–Indian rapprochement.

At the moment, all three of these scenarios look improbable. It is more likely that the Soviet Union will not reduce its support to Vietnam, that Vietnam will not make peace with China, and that the present pattern of relations will continue.

Western Policy

In assessing the implications of the Soviet–Vietnamese alliance for Western policy, several points should be kept firmly in mind. First, the combination of power rivalries described earlier will probably ensure for some time to come that both Moscow and Hanoi will derive substantial strategic benefits from their association. Second, Hanoi is and will remain extraordinarily dependent on the Soviet Union for military and economic assistance, and it is very unlikely that this dependent relationship will be altered substantially in the foreseeable future. Third, in contemplating its policy toward Vietnam, the United States must keep firmly in mind the interests of Thailand and of China. Any unilateral initiatives undertaken by the United States towards Vietnam that go against the interests of Thailand or China could cause great damage to American security interests in the Pacific. The Vietnamese and the Soviets are ceaselessly trying to exploit divisions within ASEAN over Cambodia. The United States should not assist them in this effort.

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China and Vietnam And the Struggle for Indochina

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During the Vietnam War, perceptions of Southeast Asia in the United States were shaped primarily through the prism of the Cold War. The conflict in Indochina was viewed essentially as a power struggle between the forces of International Communism and the Free World, and a victory for the former in Vietnam as a potential first step in the spread of the red tide throughout mainland Southeast Asia. The course of events since the end of the war has demonstrated the error of such assumptions. The fault lines of conflict in postwar Southeast Asia have in fact reflected more primordial historical factors, as deepseated national rivalries between Cambodia and Vietnam, and between Vietnam and China, have led to violent conflict and a realignment of political forces in the region.*

One of the key sources of conflict in contemporary Southeast Asia is the issue of Indochina, and specifically the "special relationship" which has united the three Indochinese states of Vietnam, Laos, and

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* The role of historical factors in the postwar conflict in Southeast Asia is discussed in Race and Turley.

Cambodia into an intimate political, military, and economic alliance under the guidance of Hanoi. The establishment of this special relationship among the three states after the Vietnamese invasion which overthrew the Pol Pot regime in early 1979 has led to the division of Southeast Asia into two hostile blocs—representing the Indochinese states on the one hand and the non-communist nations of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) alliance on the other. Equally important, it has been a major contributing factor in the deterioration of relations between China and Vietnam, leading to the shortlived but bitter border war of 1979 and a high level of tension between the two countries in the years that have followed it.

The aim of this report is to assess the role of China in the current regional dispute over the formation of the special relationship among the three Indochinese states. To do so is no easy task, because the issue of Indochina was only one of several factors that contributed to the breakdown in Sino–Vietnamese relations in the years following the end of the Vietnam War. This was graphically demonstrated during the crisis year of 1978, when several issues, including territorial disagreements, Hanoi's treatment of the ethnic Chinese population in Vietnam, Chinese concern at the growing intimacy in Soviet–Vietnamese relations, as well as the dispute over Cambodia, were all cited by official sources in Beijing as reasons for its dispute with Hanoi.

To disentangle the Indochina issue from other problems affecting the relationship between China and Vietnam, it will be necessary to examine relations between the communist parties in the two countries since the origin of the idea of a special relationship at the time the Indochinese Communist Party was formed.

The Breakdown in Sino–Vietnamese Relations: A Step-by-Step Account

The Concept of Indochina

There is no little irony in the fact that the concept of Indochina—a political relationship between the three neighboring states of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia—originated not in Hanoi but in Paris and, in its more modern guise, in Moscow. The concept first made its appearance at the end of the nineteenth century when French colonial officials, for administrative convenience, united their new conquests in mainland Southeast Asia into a single Indochinese Union under French control. A generation later, Comintern strategists in Moscow appropriated the concept when they advised Vietnamese revolutionaries to form a single communist party embracing all three areas and carrying the official title of Indochinese Communist Party. Comintern bureaucrats were hardly admirers of the colonial system, but they were pragmatic revolutionaries, and convinced that revolutions in small Asian countries would have a better chance to succeed if they coalesced into larger organizations. The Comintern was presumably aware that the cultural traditions in the three Indochinese societies of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia were quite dissimilar, but apparently believed that the shared experience of colonial rule created a common bond that transcended cultural differences.*

At first, some members of the young Vietnamese communist movement were evidently opposed to the adoption of the new nomenclature of the party on the grounds that there was little revolutionary activity in either Laos or Cambodia. Both societies were at a more primitive stage of political and economic development than Vietnam, and there was no national liberation movement in either country. By contrast, the sense of national identity was strong in Vietnam, and revolutionary leaders like the movement's founder Ho Chi Minh hoped to tap national sentiment by using the name Vietnamese Communist Party. But at Comintern insistence, the party dutifully accepted Moscow's reasoning and adopted the new name at a session of the new Central Committee in October 1930.**

Vietnamese doubts about the revolutionary potential of the protectorates of Laos and Cambodia appeared to be justified in the 1930s, as there was little revolutionary activity in either country prior to World War II, and, although documents of the Indochinese Communist

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* For a discussion and references, see Duiker, 1986, pp. 28–30, and Khanh, pp. 128–129.

** A Central Committee resolution providing a justification for the name change appears in *Lich su Dang Cong San Viet Nam: Trich van kien dang* [A History of the Vietnamese Communist Party: selected party documents] (Hanoi: 1979), p. 60.

Party made occasional references to the future formation of a so-called Indochinese Federation of the Democratic Republics of the three countries after the triumph of the revolution, party leaders apparently took little note of conditions in Laos and Cambodia and concentrated their efforts on Vietnam.*

Yet there was a logic to Moscow's idea of a linkage of the three societies in the common pursuit of the revolution, and this logic became increasingly clear after World War II, when party leaders like Vo Nguyen Giap became aware of the strategic importance of the entire Indochinese peninsula in carrying on the struggle against French colonialism. There were, moreover, numerous historical precedents for an active Vietnamese role in the political affairs of its neighbors to the west. During the precolonial period the Vietnamese empire had expanded southward from its historical heartland in the Red River valley and during the seventeenth century had seized the Mekong delta from the declining state of Angkor—the predecessor of modern Cambodia. In the early nineteenth century, Vietnam attempted to assert suzerainty over both Cambodia and Laos in somewhat the same way Vietnam's northern neighbor China practiced a tributary system throughout East Asia. Vietnam's major competitor in that effort was the state of Thailand to the west.**

Paradoxically, leaders of the Indochinese Communist Party became aware of the potential importance of the concept of Indochina just as a sense of national identity began to develop among patriotic elements in Laos and Cambodia. Although the rise of anticolonial sentiment stimulated the growth of the revolutionary movement in both countries, it also led to growing sensitivity on the part of Khmer and Lao members to Vietnamese domination over the party. In 1951, the party leadership responded by splitting the Indochinese Communist Party into three separate national organizations—a Vietnamese Worker's Party to represent the revolutionary movement in Vietnam, and People's Revolutionary Parties in Laos and Cambodia. The Vietnamese did not relinquish their leading role over the entire revolutionary movement in Indochina, however, and apparently still thought in terms of the future formation of an Indochinese Federation among the three states after the eviction of the French colonial regime.*

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* For reference see Porter, p. 62.

** For a discussion on nineteenth century Vietnam and its perspective on world affairs, see Woodside.

There is little information on the role of the Chinese Communist Party in the early development of the Indochinese Communist movement. During the late 1920s, the Chinese Communist Party had provided training facilities and organizational support to the young Vietnamese revolutionary movement, but contacts between the two parties were ruptured when Chiang Kai-shek consolidated control over South China, and were not resumed until the onset of World War II, at a time when the Chinese Communist Party, with its new headquarters in North China, was struggling for its own survival against Japan. Relations between the two parties remained tenuous until 1949 when the People's Republic of China was established with its capital in Beijing.

China and Indochina: Differences Come to Light

The rulers of the People's Republic of China were quick to turn their attention to the situation on their southern frontier. Although Southeast Asia had not been an area of vital security importance to China during the precolonial era, the Chinese empire had viewed the smaller nations along its southern periphery as an integral part of its "outer frontier" of client states with which it had tributary links—a set of hierarchical relations between the emperor in Beijing and the vassal rulers of the smaller states in East and Southeast Asia. Relations were particularly close with Vietnam, whose population was ethnically and culturally similar to that of South China. For a millennium, Vietnam had been an integral part of the Chinese empire. Even after the restoration of independence in the tenth century, Vietnamese monarchs paid tribute to China and looked to the North as a source of political institutions and cultural values, while tenaciously defending Vietnamese independence against periodic Chinese efforts to reconquer the area. China's relations were less close with Laos or Cambodia, both of which were culturally distinct from China. The Chinese court did attempt to maintain a tributary relationship with the rulers of both states, however.

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* For references to the split in the Indochinese Communist Party, see Brown, pp. 46–47; Kiernan, 1985, pp. 82–83; and Duiker, 1981, p. 143.

The European conquest of most of mainland Southeast Asia in the late nineteenth century graphically demonstrated China's vulnerability along its southern frontier. After World War II, the growing anticolonial struggle in Indochina and the dangers of a Cold War conflict in the region undoubtedly added to the concern of Chinese Communist Party leaders on their accession to power in Beijing. While security considerations were probably foremost in shaping Chinese foreign policy at that time, Mao Zedong and his colleagues undoubtedly retained—albeit at a subliminal level—the imperial tendency to view China as a major force on the regional scene and a potential model for the future political and social development of the newly independent states in Southeast Asia.*

In January 1950, the People's Republic of China was the first state to recognize Ho Chi Minh's Democratic Republic of Vietnam as the legitimate representative of the national aspirations of the Vietnamese people. Simultaneously, China began to provide military assistance to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in its struggle against the French. Chinese leaders undoubtedly saw the revolutionary potential of Vietnam; it could be a proving ground for their theories of national liberation. This view apparently was shared by the Vietnamese, who not only adopted Mao Zedong's concept of a people's war but also began to imitate Chinese domestic strategy in areas under their control in Vietnam.

But Chinese policymakers were also alive to the danger of a direct confrontation with the United States in Indochina. As U.S. aid to the French increased in the early 1950s, Chinese assistance to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was carefully calibrated to keep the struggle from getting out of hand and involving China in an open conflict with Washington. When the possibility of a negotiated settlement of the Franco–Vietminh conflict surfaced in late 1953, Beijing appeared to welcome a settlement and may even have pressured the Vietnamese to come to the conference table.

According to the Vietnamese, it was at the Geneva Conference, held in the spring and summer of 1954, that potential differences between China and Vietnam over the future of Indochina first came to light. In an official White Paper issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1979, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam claimed that Zhou Enlai, China's negotiator at Geneva, openly lobbied to prevent a total victory for the Vietnamese revolutionary forces in order to maintain a divided Vietnam and forestall a possible move by the United States to become actively involved militarily in Indochina. It was also at Geneva, Hanoi claims, that China for the first time demonstrated its objection to Vietnamese plans to unite Indochina when Zhou colluded with Western delegates to prevent the seating of representatives of the Laotian and Cambodian revolutionary movements at the conference and accepted instead the credentials of the royal governments created by the French. According to the White Paper, China's aim was to maintain the division of Indochina in order to create a buffer zone of neutral states in the area and facilitate the future expansion of Chinese power in the region.*

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* The best example of this attitude is found in Liu Shaoqi's famous speech before the Trade Union Congress in Beijing in November 1949. See Gurtov, pp. 7–8, and Chou, pp. 214–220.

Based on the evidence at hand, Hanoi's contention that China placed its own desire for a reduction of Cold War tensions in Southeast Asia over the needs of the Vietnamese revolution seems close to the mark. By 1954, Chinese foreign policy had begun the transition from its initial revolutionary phase toward an emphasis on moderation. To Chinese leaders, a settlement at Geneva that led to peace in Vietnam and the creation of neutral regimes in Laos and Cambodia promised to provide China with a stable southern frontier and a more secure international environment in which to pursue its plans for internal economic development.

Hanoi's charge that Beijing's policy was also motivated by the desire to maintain a divided Indochina in order to facilitate Chinese domination over the area in the future is more difficult to evaluate. The Vietnamese have provided little proof to substantiate such a charge, but there is some circumstantial evidence that Beijing was determined to prevent Vietnam from exerting control over Laos and Cambodia. As noted above, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam had modified its plan for creating a united Indochina in 1951, when the Indochinese Communist Party was split into three national revolutionary organizations, but internal party documents suggest that these plans had not been formally abandoned. China had been publicly noncommittal about such plans but could not have been delighted with them, since such an arrangement would rule out a meaningful role for China in the area. In early July 1954, Zhou Enlai met with Vietnamese president Ho Chi Minh to coordinate final arrangements for the Geneva Accords. In a communique issued at the close of the meeting, the two sides agreed that their relations with Laos and Cambodia should be characterized by the five principles of peaceful coexistence. While the agreement does not rule out the creation of an Indochinese Federation, the context suggests that Zhou had exacted a promise in private from Ho Chi Minh to give up the federation idea in return for continued Chinese support.*

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* For an extended discussion of the issue, see Joyaux.

The Geneva settlement awarded control over North Vietnam to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, which established its capital at Hanoi in October 1954. But the settlement left Vietnamese leaders embittered at what they considered the Chinese betrayal of the Indochinese revolution. The need for the two countries to cooperate against the common threat of imperialism overrode such tensions, however, and during the next two decades Sino–Vietnamese relations were marked by public expressions of fraternal cordiality, while China provided a significant amount of assistance to North Vietnam in its struggle against the United States in South Vietnam. In public, too, Hanoi and Beijing appeared to cooperate on Laos and Cambodia, adopting parallel policies resulting in the maintenance of friendly relations with the neutralist regimes in the two countries. This cooperation suited the interests of both countries, since it prevented the spread of U.S. power in the region beyond South Vietnam. For North Vietnam, it provided the extra bonus of permitting Hanoi to use the border regions as a sanctuary for its troops and a communications link to infiltrate men and equipment into the South. In order to maintain such benefits, the Hanoi regime apparently instructed the revolutionary parties in both Laos and Cambodia to moderate their own revolutionary struggles until victory in South Vietnam had been secured.

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* Chinese officials insist that at that time China did not suspect that Vietnam planned to dominate Indochina. One Chinese diplomat informed me privately, however, that in his view Beijing was indeed concerned at Vietnamese plans to form a federation in Indochina. See Duiker, 1986, p. 31.

Upheaval in Cambodia: Danger and Opportunity for China and Vietnam

The Sino–Vietnamese *modus vivendi* in Laos lasted until the end of the Vietnam War. Vietnamese influence was paramount within the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, but Beijing was able to maintain its own presence in the northern provinces, where thousands of Chinese construction workers, with the tacit approval of Laotian Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma, were building a road network near the Chinese border. In Cambodia, however, the delicate balancing act began to come apart even before the overthrow of Prince Norodom Sihanouk in 1970. The emergence of Pol Pot as general secretary of the Khmer People's Revolutionary Party in 1963 was undoubtedly a contributing factor. Pol Pot was suspicious of Vietnamese intentions in Indochina and soon indicated that he would no longer accept Vietnamese direction over his party (now renamed the Khmer Communist Party). Although there is no firm evidence that China played a meaningful role in Pol Pot's rise to power, there is no doubt that the new situation provided China with the means to challenge Hanoi's erstwhile domination over the revolutionary movement in Cambodia.

The coup d'état which overthrew the regime of Prince Sihanouk in March 1970 intensified the strains in the relationship between Hanoi and Beijing and put the two on a collision course in Indochina. Although the coup threatened Vietnamese access to its sanctuaries in eastern Cambodia, it also opened up the possibility that the revolutionary cause could eventually triumph over the weak military regime of General Lon Nol. After a short period of hesitation, Vietnamese leaders decided to back an accelerated effort by the armed forces of the Khmer Communist Party, popularly labelled the Khmer Rouge.

For China, the problem was fraught equally with danger and opportunity. A victory for the revolutionary forces in Cambodia could work to Beijing's advantage. Pol Pot was a fervent admirer of the Cultural Revolution and had developed friendly relations with Chinese leaders during a visit to Beijing in 1966. On the other hand, a rise in the insurgency movement could lead to the extension of the U.S. military presence in Cambodia and delay the gradual withdrawal from the region set in motion by President Richard Nixon. Moreover, the overthrow of the Lon Nol regime could open up Cambodia to Vietnamese domination, since an active role by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam would obviously be required to promote the fortunes of the inexperienced Khmer Rouge.

The formulation of a new strategy to respond to the changing situation in Cambodia was undoubtedly complicated by the continuing power struggle in Beijing between radicals associated with the Cultural Revolution and emerging moderate elements around Zhou Enlai. In the end, China decided to support the revolutionary movement in Cambodia but attempted to preserve its own interests by giving firm support to Sihanouk as the titular leader of the coalition of groups opposing the Lon Nol regime.* Sihanouk himself undoubtedly welcomed Chinese participation as a means of preventing Vietnamese domination over the movement. At a conference held in Guangzhou in April, representatives of China, North Vietnam, and the revolutionary parties in Laos and Cambodia agreed to cooperate in the common cause. Under the surface, however, tensions were apparently high. Vietnamese sources would later charge that China had attempted to use the meeting to extend its own influence in Indochina (Socialist Republic of Vietnam, p. 52).**

For the remainder of the war, the revolutionary movement in Cambodia functioned on two levels. On the surface, Beijing, Hanoi, and the Khmer Rouge leadership cooperated in the common struggle to overthrow the Lon Nol regime in Phnom Penh. Outside the public eye, a growing rivalry between Vietnam and the Pol Pot faction, which dominated the Khmer Communist Party, was taking place within the Cambodian revolutionary coalition. Several hundred Cambodian revolutionaries who had spent the years since the Geneva Conference in exile in North Vietnam were infiltrated into Cambodia after 1970 to help strengthen the young and inexperienced Khmer Rouge leadership. Hanoi undoubtedly hoped that these so-called "Hanoi Khmer" would dilute Pol Pot's control over the party and increase Vietnamese influence in Cambodia. But the Pol Pot leadership systematically purged the Khmer Communist Party of all elements suspected of harboring pro-Vietnamese feelings. At the moment of victory in

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* The moderates and the radicals in China held divergent views on a number of foreign policy issues, including the advisability of improving relations with the United States. See Garver, pp. 130–131.

** For a brief discussion and references, see Duiker, 1986, p. 57.

April 1975, relations between the two parties were severely strained, despite heavy Vietnamese involvement in the final takeover of power in Phnom Penh.*

Forming the Special Relationship, 1975–1979

The already tense relationship between Hanoi and the Khmer Communist Party deteriorated rapidly after Pol Pot's rise to power in the spring of 1975. While attention abroad was focused on the bitter clashes which took place along the mutual frontier, at the root of the dispute was Hanoi's call for the formation of a special relationship between the three Indochinese states in the postwar era. High-level officials in Vietnam (renamed in July 1976 the Socialist Republic of Vietnam) began to call for the formation of such an arrangement in speeches and statements shortly after the end of the Vietnam War. Party General Secretary Le Duan, in a speech for the National Assembly in June 1976, described the special relationship as "the primary and basic content of our foreign policy." The Vietnamese were able to reach agreement with the new revolutionary government in Laos, and a treaty of friendship and cooperation between the two countries was signed in July 1977. But the Pol Pot regime—now calling itself Democratic Kampuchea—rejected the proposal, describing Hanoi's concept of a special relationship as simply a new name for the old Indochinese Federation and a figleaf for Vietnamese domination over its smaller neighbors.**

The dispute between Hanoi and Phnom Penh exacerbated the latent tensions between Hanoi and Beijing that had lain under the surface during the closing years of the Vietnam War. China had not been directly involved in the civil war that had erupted in Cambodia after the coup d'état of 1970, although it provided modest military and economic assistance to the coalition forces under the titular leadership of Prince Norodom Sihanouk. But Beijing was quick to turn the new situation to its own advantage. In May 1975, only a few weeks after the Khmer Rouge had seized power in Phnom Penh, Pol Pot visited China and signed an agreement according to which China promised to provide economic assistance to the new regime and send a mission to Phnom Penh to train the Cambodian armed forces. In return, Pol Pot took China's side in its dispute with the Soviet Union.*

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* For a discussion of the tension between Pol Pot elements and the "Hanoi Khmer" within the Khmer Communist Party, see Kiernan, pp. 317–342. Official sources in Hanoi today contend that the Khmer Communist Party could not have seized Phnom Penh without Vietnamese assistance.

** Compare Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh's speech at the Fourth Party Congress in December 1976.

China and Vietnam Try to Avoid a Crisis. It is highly doubtful that either Beijing or Hanoi wanted a confrontation over Cambodia at a time when Sino–Vietnamese relations were already troubled by strains that had developed in the final years of the war. In fact, both regimes initially adopted a cautious approach to the Cambodian problem in an apparent effort to prevent it from putting Sino–Vietnamese relations on a collision course. The Vietnamese showed patience in dealing with the new regime in Phnom Penh, alternating the carrot of negotiations with the stick of military intimidation. There was undoubtedly some concern in Hanoi that Pol Pot was being supported by the Chinese. At the same time, according to Vice Foreign Minister Vo Dong Giang, whom I interviewed in Hanoi in December 1985, Vietnamese leaders still believed at that time that Phnom Penh's aggressive behavior was caused primarily by Pol Pot's own "big ambitions" and hoped that China, in the interests of maintaining a fraternal relationship with Vietnam, could be persuaded to bring him to reason.

China, too, appeared reluctant to provoke a crisis. It took no overt action to oppose Vietnamese domination over Laos and continued to provide assistance to the latter in constructing a road network in the northern provinces. Although there is little doubt that Beijing saw the value of Pol Pot in hindering Hanoi's effort to consolidate its own position in Indochina, at least some elements within the Chinese leadership showed signs of being uncomfortable with their new protégé in Phnom Penh. According to Norodom Sihanouk, Zhou Enlai, shortly before his death in January 1976, had vainly advised Khmer Rouge leader Khieu Samphan to avoid the radical policies of the Great Leap Forward and adopt a policy of gradual advance to socialism. Chinese leaders also suggested that Sihanouk, who had briefly remained in Beijing after the end of the war, be allowed to return to Phnom Penh as a symbol of the new regime. They also reportedly counselled the Cambodians to seek a negotiated settlement of their border dispute with Vietnam. The Pol Pot regime agreed to invite Sihanouk to return to his country but placed him in virtual house arrest where he stayed until the Vietnamese invasion at the end of 1978. On all other counts, however, Phnom Penh ignored Chinese advice, launching a program of radical transformation which emptied the cities and virtually eliminated the educational elite in the country, while at the same time deliberately provoking the Vietnamese with border attacks along the frontier with South Vietnam.*

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* For comments on Pol Pot's trip, see People's Republic of Kampuchea, p. 76.

In fact, China was caught in a serious dilemma in formulating a policy on Indochina. It could hardly acquiesce in Hanoi's attempt to establish a special relationship with Laos and Cambodia. That would freeze out all Chinese influence in the area and open up both states to Vietnamese domination at a time when Vietnam was increasingly turning to the Soviet Union for support. But any strategy involving all-out support for Phnom Penh would tie Beijing to an unstable and uncontrollable regime and risk driving Hanoi into a formal alliance with Moscow. Beijing's actions throughout much of 1977 reflected that ambiguity; China provided increased assistance to Democratic Kampuchea but refrained from actions that might provoke a break in relations with Hanoi. It is not unlikely that the apparent ambivalence in Chinese policy reflected policy disagreements in Beijing, with elements around Mao's appointee Hua Guofeng arguing for firm support for Phnom Penh and moderates tied to the rise of Deng Xiaoping calling for a more cautious approach (Chanda, *Brother Enemy*, pp. 99–101).

A glaring example of the contradictions in Chinese policy was displayed in a speech given by Foreign Minister Huang Hua in July 1977. Huang called for a cease-fire and a negotiated settlement of the dispute between Vietnam and Cambodia based on the principles enunciated at the 1970 Guangzhou conference on Indochina. He offered Chinese mediation and promised that the People's Republic of China would not take sides in the dispute. But he also warned that China supported Cambodia against "Soviet revisionist social-imperialism" and would not watch with indifference any attack by social-imperialism on Cambodia's territorial integrity and national sovereignty. Huang had been careful not to name Vietnam as a direct threat to Cambodia, but the implication was clear (translated in Chen).

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* For sources indicating China's displeasure at the behavior of the Phnom Penh regime, see Sihanouk, p. 86, and Geng Biao.

Hopes for a Peaceful Settlement Recede. Despite the apparent efforts on both sides to forestall a crisis, the situation steadily worsened in late 1977. Throughout the year, clashes along the Cambodian–Vietnamese border steadily intensified, leading to an almost total breakdown in relations between the two countries. In November, Le Duan led a delegation to Beijing in an apparent last-ditch effort to persuade China to help avert an open conflict. Chinese leaders, however, reportedly refused the request to offer their good offices and demanded a full withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia.* Based on the evidence at hand, the November talks in Beijing may have represented a turning point in Sino–Vietnamese relations, with both sides now beginning to despair of a peaceful settlement of the dispute. In a secret speech given in early 1979 and later leaked to the West, Chinese Communist Party Politburo member Geng Biao remarked that by the time of the Le Duan visit in November 1977, "differences between Vietnam and Kampuchea were no longer concealable." Having failed to keep the contradictions between the two Indochinese states from public view, in December China decided "to assist Kampuchea in force so as to equip them with a greater capability to cope with new situations that could occur because a solution through talks proved impossible" (Geng Biao, p. 9).

Unfortunately, too little is known about the November talks to permit informed speculation as to their substance. Geng Biao's brief comments, however, suggest that Le Duan's visit may have marked a decisive stage in China's evaluation of the Indochina situation, as Chinese leaders then realized that Hanoi could not be dissuaded from its determination to impose its special relationship on the Pol Pot regime. Certainly the signs from Indochina must have seemed ominous, viewed from Beijing. As a result of the latest round of border clashes, Vietnamese troops had now occupied a substantial tract of territory in Cambodia's eastern provinces and had begun negotiations with dissident elements within the Pol Pot regime. Such factors, combined with the unyielding attitude displayed by Vietnamese negotiators in November, may have been interpreted in Beijing as an indication that a peaceful resolution of the conflict was improbable if not impossible.

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* Chanda, pp. 201–202, discusses the visit.

In mid-January 1978, China sent a delegation headed by Zhou Enlai's widow Deng Yingzhao to Phnom Penh. Press reports in the West interpreted the visit as a public indication of Beijing's support for the Pol Pot regime in its struggle with Vietnam. One motive for the trip may indeed have been the desire to induce a mood of caution in Hanoi, but Madame Deng also carried words of caution for the Pol Pot regime, suggesting that Chinese leaders were still hoping to prevent, or at least delay, an all-out military confrontation. According to Geng Biao's report, there was serious debate within the Communist Party leadership over how far China should go to help the Phnom Penh regime, with a majority favoring a cautious policy short of all-out support. In any event, Deng Yingzhao reportedly advised her hosts to adopt a more flexible stance on the border issue but was rebuffed (Heder, pp. 454–456).

The November meeting in Beijing may have been equally decisive for Vietnamese party leaders, who were now increasingly convinced that China was determined to humiliate the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and bring it to heel. In any event, Vietnamese leaders must have felt their options narrowing at the end of 1977. The bitter experience of the war had been conclusive proof of the crucial importance of a secure relationship with the nations on Vietnam's western frontier. While the concept of an Indochinese federation had been formally abandoned during the 1950s, the idea of a close alliance between the three countries after the triumph of the revolutionary cause had undoubtedly become an axiom of Vietnamese foreign policy, and the concept of a special relationship was probably seen in Hanoi as a means of achieving such an alliance while placating sensitive minds in Phnom Penh and Vientiane.

Events after 1975 quickly confirmed the validity of such views but showed that the primary threat to Vietnamese national security in the postwar era would come from unexpected directions—from within Cambodia and from the north. At first, Vietnamese leaders had adopted a relatively tolerant attitude toward the Pol Pot regime but by the end of 1977 had begun to take a more somber view, as they realized that Beijing, as well as Phnom Penh, was unalterably opposed to Hanoi's plan for a special relationship in Indochina.

Vietnam Takes Decisive Action. The Vietnamese then had to decide whether or not to back an effort to place a new leadership in Phnom Penh. The argument for decisive action must have appeared persuasive. Hanoi was already in contact with dissident elements in the Pol Pot regime. Postponement would provide the Pol Pot leadership with time to crush internal resistance to its authority, and China with the opportunity to strengthen the Khmer Rouge armed forces for a possible future confrontation with the Vietnamese. Yet it was increasingly clear that an overt effort to overthrow Pol Pot would risk a direct conflict with China. Such a conflict could have several unpalatable consequences, in internal as well as foreign affairs. It would pose a severe strain on a Vietnamese economy already stretched to the limit by a postwar reconstruction crisis. It could further divide a party leadership already at odds over domestic policy. And it certainly could compel Hanoi to abandon its effort to adopt a flexible policy in foreign affairs in favor of a closer embrace with Moscow.

In February 1978 the party (renamed in December 1976 the Vietnamese Communist Party) held its Fourth Plenum to consider policy proposals by the Politburo, which had met the previous month. Party leaders may have considered two options: a general uprising, launched by Khmer forces opposed to Pol Pot inside Cambodia and supported discreetly by Vietnamese units, or an all-out invasion by Vietnamese troops with support from guerrilla units recruited inside Cambodia and among Khmer refugees in South Vietnam. Preparations for both contingencies were apparently underway inside Vietnam, but ultimately the party selected the first option, calling for an internal uprising against the Pol Pot regime. Such a strategy lacked the decisiveness of a conventional assault by Vietnamese forces but would avoid international complications and reduce the risk of a direct Chinese response. Moreover, it could provide a firm basis for the formation of a new regime in Phnom Penh sympathetic to Hanoi and the formation of a special relationship with the other two Indochinese states.

The plenum also adopted a major decision on the domestic scene, approving a proposal to nationalize all commerce and industry above the family level throughout Vietnam. Although the decision was made in part to strengthen state control over the faltering national economy, it had strong implications for foreign policy, since the bulk of the trade and manufacturing sector in South Vietnam was controlled by Chinese nationals, many of whom were suspected of being loyal to Beijing.*

Hanoi's nationalization order precipitated a panic among ethnic Chinese residents in Vietnam, many of whom attempted to flee across the border into China. On May 12, China cancelled a number of aid projects in Vietnam. Two weeks later, it launched a major press campaign against alleged Vietnamese persecution of the overseas Chinese living in Vietnam. It was not until several days later that the Chinese press began to focus on foreign policy differences, criticizing Hanoi as an "Asian Cuba" and a "tool of Moscow."**

The press war over the refugee issue, along with increasingly bitter clashes along the Sino–Vietnamese frontier, brought the long-simmering feud between the two countries into the open. In fact, by May both Hanoi and Beijing had apparently decided that a compromise solution to the Cambodian dispute was highly improbable and began to make preparations for a head-on confrontation. Vietnamese leaders had hoped to avoid a direct confrontation by removing the Pol Pot regime through an internal uprising, but in late May, at virtually the same time that China began its press campaign against the Vietnamese, armed units of the Pol Pot regime closed out that option when they attacked rebel headquarters near the South Vietnamese border, leading the commander, So Phim, to commit suicide.***

Plans for an Invasion Are Resurrected. Phnom Penh's success in rooting out dissident elements within the Khmer Communist Party forced the Hanoi regime to reconsider its options and return to the proposal for an invasion of Cambodia by regular units of the People's Army of Vietnam. According to Nayan Chanda, a high Soviet military figure had suggested such an operation earlier in the year, but the idea had been rejected in Hanoi in favor of the less risky option of an internal uprising. Now the idea was resurrected (Chanda, *Brother Enemy,* p. 216).

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* For a discussion, see Duiker, 1985, Chapter II.

** For a discussion of the issue of the overseas Chinese in the context of the overall Sino–Vietnamese dispute, see Sutter, 1986, pp. 73–75.

*** So Phim's abortive effort to overthrow Pol Pot is related in Ben Kiernan, 1983, pp. 136–211.

The decision was apparently cleared with Moscow, for Soviet support would be required, not only in the form of military assistance, but also as a means of deterring China from undertaking a direct response. It was probably for this reason that the Vietnamese Communist Party's long-time military strategist Vo Nguyen Giap went to the Soviet Union in June. He may have carried with him the draft of a treaty of friendship and cooperation that the Vietnamese had originally rejected in 1975, at a time when party leaders had still hoped to maintain an independent foreign policy. In the new circumstances, independence was a luxury that Hanoi could ill afford. In any event, Moscow was ready if not eager to agree to such a treaty, to be announced at a time useful to Vietnam. In return, the Soviet Union was granted access to military facilities in Vietnam, a concession that the Vietnamese had resisted for years.*

Not long after Giap's return from Moscow, the Central Committee of the Vietnamese Communist Party convened its Fifth Plenum in late June. While the evidence is scanty, it was probably at this time that the party formally approved the proposal to sign the treaty with the Soviet Union and began preparations for an invasion of Democratic Kampuchea later in the year. The decision was certainly not unanimous. On August 4, 1978, there were references in the official press (*Nhan Dan*) to party members who showed weakness in facing the crisis and warnings that the party "must leave behind and discard weak elements incapable of enduring trials or bent on giving up or betraying the cause."

China was undoubtedly aware of Vietnamese war preparations through its own intelligence sources, and the issue was probably one of serious debate in Beijing throughout the summer and early fall. There are indications that some elements within the Chinese leadership favored the dispatch of Chinese armed forces to the area to provide assistance to the Pol Pot regime, whose ability to withstand a direct Vietnamese invasion was considered minimal. According to Geng Biao, whose secret speech in February 1979 has been cited above, one proposal called for the dispatch of Chinese naval units to the Gulf of Thailand to assist Democratic Kampuchea in guarding its territorial waters, while General Xu Shiyou apparently suggested the launching of military operations along the Sino–Vietnamese border. Geng Biao's speech is not specific on when these discussions took place. From the context, it appears they may have occurred after Wang Dongxing's visit to Phnom Penh in the fall (Geng Biao, p. 9).

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* There was some speculation as to whether Hanoi asked for the treaty or Moscow demanded it as a price for assistance. According to Vo Dong Giang, Hanoi wanted the treaty for its own protection.

China Avoids Direct Involvement. By then, the Pol Pot regime was aware of the peril, and at some point during the fall made a formal request for the dispatch of Chinese troops to Cambodia. In the end, however, China decided to refrain from risking a direct involvement in the dispute and limited itself to increasing military assistance to its beleaguered ally. Geng Biao offered a number of reasons for the decision. In the first place, he said, as a "socialist state" China must avoid actions suggesting that it might seek hegemony in Asia. Direct Chinese military involvement in Cambodia could expose China to criticism and prevent it from taking a position of moral rectitude in the conflict. Second, China would have great difficulty in fighting a war of attrition in Indochina. Vietnam, he said, "has already stepped into this patch of mud." Finally, Geng Biao asserted, direct involvement in the Cambodian conflict would undercut China's effort to carry out the "four modernizations" and expose it to a possible Soviet attack from the North. Cambodia, he concluded, should fight its own battles in order to learn self-reliance (Geng Biao, pp. 10–11).

Some of Geng Biao's comments can be dismissed as self-serving or wish fulfillment, but overall they carry the mark of plausibility. Chinese strategists certainly recognized the strategic disadvantages that China confronted in taking an active role in the conflict (it is interesting to note that Geng cited the lessons learned by the United States in fighting its own land wars in Asia). His reference to the impact that Chinese participation in the war could have on its international reputation also rings true, as Chinese leaders were undoubtedly aware of the sensitivity of many states in Southeast Asia to the potential threat of Chinese expansion into the region and anxious to preserve the moral high ground in the court of public opinion.

Last but by no means least, Chinese leaders were probably determined not to allow foreign policy complications to undercut the regime's program of economic modernization as the matter of first priority in national calculations for the foreseeable future. While Deng Xiaoping was anxious to carry out a high visibility foreign policy, he appeared willing to put off long-term objectives in foreign affairs until such time as China possessed the economic and military muscle to play a major role in regional and global affairs. While Geng's contention that Moscow was goading Beijing into military action in order to delay Chinese modernization seems implausible, Moscow and Hanoi may well have calculated that domestic concerns would deter Beijing from attempting a military response.

As Robert Sutter has pointed out, a final factor may have entered the deliberations in Beijing. Some top officials argued that Vietnamese pressure on Cambodia represented a direct threat to Chinese security and demanded a vigorous response. Others, possibly including Deng Xiaoping himself, argued that the real threat to China came not from the south, but from the north, where several hundred thousand Soviet troops were stationed along the Chinese border. By implication, China should not be distracted by events in Southeast Asia from the strategically vital area along the Sino–Soviet frontier (Sutter, 1981, pp. 181–182).

Vietnam and Cambodia Seek Powerful Protectors. During the remainder of the year, both Vietnam and Cambodia concentrated on strengthening their position for what must have seemed the inevitable conflict to come. Both saw the importance of a powerful protector. Hanoi, of course, relied above all on the support of the U.S.S.R., a relationship that was formalized in the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation signed in early November.* Hanoi also attempted to improve relations with the United States in order to neutralize its role in the conflict. At a time when Soviet–American relations were deteriorating, however, China had more to offer and won the competition for Washington's approval, although the issue caused some discord within the Carter Administration.**

Both Hanoi and Beijing also recognized the importance of marshalling international support for their cause. The attitude of the neighboring states in Southeast Asia, notably members of ASEAN, could be a major factor in determining the attitude of Third World states to the dispute over Cambodia. During the autumn of 1978, both Deng Xiaoping and Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Van Dong embarked on extended tours of Southeast Asian capitals.

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* The text of this treaty may be found in the Appendix.

** This debate is reported in Chanda, Chapter 9.

ASEAN leaders tended to be suspicious of the ultimate objectives of both Hanoi and Beijing, however, and made no commitments to either.

Vietnam Invades Cambodia and China Responds. Vietnamese forces invaded Democratic Kampuchea on December 25, 1978. The invasion was as successful as the final campaign three years before which had put a quick end to the Saigon regime. Within a little over a week, units of the People's Army of Vietnam had seized the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh and forced Khmer Rouge units to seek refuge in the isolated forests of the northwest or in the rugged mountains near the Gulf of Thailand. On December 7, 1979, a new government, called the People's Republic of Kampuchea and led by a little unknown ex-Khmer Rouge corps commander named Heng Samrin, was announced in Phnom Penh.

China's initial reaction to the Vietnamese invasion was limited to vaguely threatening statements in the press. Only in February, after the return of Deng Xiaoping from his visit to the United States, did Beijing launch its limited attack across the Sino–Vietnamese frontier. The timing of the attack seemed deliberately contrived to take advantage of the successful normalization of relations with the United States and leave the impression of U.S. support or sympathy with China's objectives. The scope of the attack was also instructive. It was limited enough not to damage China's economic modernization program. Moreover, by clearly signalling its limited objectives, Beijing forestalled the possibility of a direct Soviet response and reduced the level of world criticism. Yet the attack was of sufficient magnitude to damage Vietnamese border defenses and demonstrate China's willingness to respond to a provocation.

What the attack did not do, of course, was to provide concrete support to the beleaguered Khmer Rouge forces in Cambodia. Although there was some speculation at the time that one objective of the campaign had been to compel Hanoi to withdraw some of its front-line troops from Cambodia, in retrospect it seems clear that the invasion was too brief and limited in scope to have had more than a passing impact on the strength and capabilities of the Vietnamese forces in Cambodia. The Chinese attack also appeared to have failed to achieve Beijing's major declared objective of teaching Vietnam a lesson. Although Vietnamese border units suffered heavy casualties, their performance against the regular forces of the Chinese People's

Liberation Army must have been reassuring to Hanoi strategists. By contrast, the Chinese army showed serious weaknesses in equipment, leadership, and logistics. In that sense, the "lesson" had been administered by the Vietnamese.

The Dispute over Cambodia: Prime Cause of the Breakdown in Sino–Vietnamese Relations

Based on the above reconstruction of the events, it can be concluded that there were several issues involved in the breakdown of Sino–Vietnamese relations in the years following the end of the Vietnam War: the Cambodian dispute, territorial disagreements, the refugee crisis, and Hanoi's decision to strengthen its military relationship with Moscow. Which was most responsible for Beijing's decision to go to war? Some observers, noting the bitterness of Chinese press attacks on Vietnam at the time of the refugee crisis, have speculated that the refugee issue was one of the key factors in Beijing's decision to go to war. In fact, Chinese leaders may have been genuinely outraged by Hanoi's harsh treatment of ethnic Chinese living in Vietnam and may have viewed that treatment as a symbol of Vietnamese arrogance and a direct provocation at a time when China had just launched a program to seek support from the overseas Chinese for China's modernization effort. Beijing may have concluded that Hanoi's behavior demanded a firm response.[*]

But it is unlikely that the plight of ethnic Chinese residents in Vietnam was the primary cause of Beijing's sudden outburst. China had often tolerated mistreatment of overseas Chinese by other states in the region (most recently, by the government of Democratic Kampuchea, China's closest ally in Southeast Asia). What made Hanoi's action intolerable was that it symbolized Vietnamese arrogance at a time when the relationship between the two regimes was already strained by disputes over other issues. Chinese leaders may have used the issue of the refugees as a pretext to dramatize to Hanoi the extent of their outrage over Vietnamese behavior in areas of greater intrinsic importance to China.

Why did China delay its response until late May, over two months after Hanoi's decision to nationalize industry and commerce and destroy the economic power of the Chinese community in Vietnam? There may, of course, have been continuing policy differences over the issue within the Chinese leadership.* Some observers, however, suspect that Beijing's Indochina policy was affected by the improvement in relations between China and the United States. They point out that the Chinese press attacks on Vietnam took place almost immediately following the visit to China of U.S. National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski in mid-May. By early spring, Chinese leaders had probably concluded that Hanoi was bent on overthrowing the Pol Pot regime and that a Sino-Vietnamese confrontation over Cambodia was virtually inevitable. If such a conflict were to take place, the Vietnamese would be compelled to turn for increased support from Moscow. In such conditions, Beijing would need the expectation of at least tacit approval and support from the United States, which had its own reasons for opposing Vietnamese gains in the region. Brzezinski, a forceful advocate of using the "China card" against the U.S.S.R. and its ally in Southeast Asia, apparently provided such reassurances.**

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[*] See Chanda, pp. 235–238, for information on the historical background of the issue.

What role did the Soviet Union play in China's calculations? Policymakers in Beijing undoubtedly watched with growing anxiety as Hanoi moved progressively closer to the Soviet Union in the immediate postwar period. But several factors suggest that the Soviet threat was not the decisive factor in China's decision to act in Indochina. In the first place, Sino-Vietnamese rivalry over Indochina predated by several years active Soviet involvement in the region. In the second place, if Geng Biao's report is reliable, Beijing may have decided to risk a confrontation with Vietnam over Cambodia several months in advance of Hanoi's decision to turn for military assistance to the Soviet Union. Chinese leaders apparently decided to confront Vietnam on Cambodia despite the almost certain knowledge that such an eventuality would increase Hanoi's dependence on Moscow. In other words, the growing role of the Soviet Union in the region, although undoubtedly a source of anxiety to Chinese leaders, was most likely not the crucial factor in their deliberations.

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* According to a number of observers, the struggle between elements loyal to Deng Xiaoping and followers of Hua Guofeng had not yet been resolved. See Sutter, 1986, pp. 60–61.

** According to Geng Biao, the Chinese did have expectations that the Carter Administration would provide some low-level support for Chinese military operations in Southeast Asia (Geng Biao, p. 13). On the significance of Brzezinski's visit to China, see Chanda, pp. 241–242, and Evans and Rowley, p. 159.

If the above analysis is correct, the dispute over Cambodia was probably the issue most directly responsible for provoking the outbreak of the Sino–Vietnamese conflict in 1979. It is worthy of note, however, that China had not openly opposed the signing of the Lao–Vietnamese Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in 1977,* even though the growing Vietnamese presence in Laos was undoubtedly of concern to Chinese leaders. What, then, had provoked China to confront Hanoi in Cambodia? It is likely that Vietnamese policy in Cambodia was part of a larger problem in Sino–Vietnamese relations which was increasingly bothersome to Beijing. Hanoi's insistence on a special relationship with Phnom Penh, along with the territorial disagreement, the dispute over Hanoi's treatment of Chinese nationals in Vietnam, and growing Vietnamese ties with and dependence upon the Soviet Union, were all indications of a growing sense of Vietnamese independence and even arrogance which to Chinese leaders represented gross ingratitude for Chinese aid during the war and a worrisome departure from the "lips and teeth" relationship which—in Chinese eyes—had been the traditional and proper one between the two countries.

The Struggle for Cambodia, 1979–1987

Whatever the ultimate causes of the Sino–Vietnamese conflict, it soon became clear from the strategies adopted in Hanoi and Beijing that Cambodia would become the focus of the rivalry between the two regimes in the next decade, as each probed for weaknesses in the other's defenses. For leaders in both capitals, Cambodia had become a test of will. In that struggle, Hanoi had a number of advantages. By virtue of its military power and the geopolitical situation, it operated from a strong position against the Chinese, whose access to Cambodia was limited. Moreover, the presence of Vietnamese troops inside Cambodia provided Hanoi with the opportunity to mold the situation in that country to its advantage. The brutal reputation of the Khmer Rouge, whose bloody excesses had earned the hatred of most Cambodians and were now coming to the attention of a horrified world, made it easier for Hanoi to act. China had undoubtedly taken such factors into account in its decision not to become directly involved in the conflict in Cambodia.

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* The text of this treaty may be found in the Appendix.

Yet the fact that Beijing now deliberately elected to undertake a test of wills with Hanoi in Cambodia suggests that Chinese leaders felt there were compensating factors that operated in China's favor and key among them was Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia.

In the first place, Hanoi's overt invasion of Democratic Kampuchea had sharpened latent fears of Vietnamese expansionism among the ASEAN states and aroused widespread condemnation on the world scene.* The effect was particularly strong in Thailand, where rivalry with Vietnam over Indochina had deep historical roots. As Geng Biao had predicted, the decision by China to refrain from direct involvement in the conflict provided it with the moral high ground from which to construct a united front to force a Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia.

Second, Chinese leaders undoubtedly counted on the nascent force of Khmer nationalism as an element which could ultimately work in China's favor. While most Cambodians undoubtedly welcomed the overthrow of the ferocious Khmer Rouge and may have initially viewed Vietnamese occupation troops as benefactors, historical distrust of the Vietnamese would ultimately be sharpened by an extended occupation of the country. A high level of resistance activity by the Khmer Rouge inside the country could exacerbate latent Khmer–Vietnamese tensions and lead to a breakdown of the "special relationship" and a collapse of the People's Republic of Kampuchea.

Finally, Chinese leaders undoubtedly calculated that the continuing costs of the occupation would prove damaging to Vietnam in terms

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* Vietnamese sources do not concede that the overthrow of the Pol Pot regime was an invasion but instead contend that Vietnamese forces responded to Khmer Rouge attacks and crossed the border in self-defense. Dissident elements in Cambodia then launched a general offensive and uprising. See Truong Chinh, p. 19.

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of internal economic development and morale. In his report, Geng Biao had conceded that China lacked the resources to undertake a war of attrition and predicted that Hanoi, too, would find it a costly venture. Beijing was prepared to intensify Hanoi's difficulties by applying pressure on the Sino–Vietnamese border to force Vietnam to maintain a high level of defensive readiness, by promoting sabotage and resistance operations by dissident groups inside Vietnam, and by encouraging the formation of a world-wide economic blockade of Vietnam. While none of these tactics was likely to achieve quick results, collectively they would impose minimal cost on China while placing heavy pressure on the Vietnamese.

The Centerpiece of Chinese Strategy: Formation of a Coalition to Pressure Vietnam

Ultimately, then, Beijing had crafted a long-range strategy based on the assumption that China's superior resources, combined with Vietnam's internal weakness and the instability of its position in Cambodia, would force a change of policy in Hanoi. China did not seem optimistic that the veteran Vietnamese leadership under General Secretary Le Duan would be amenable to change. But Chinese leaders were undoubtedly aware of the strains within the Vietnamese Communist Party over domestic and foreign policy and counted on the passage of time to bring a new and more conciliatory leadership to power in Hanoi.*

The centerpiece of Chinese strategy was the creation of a coalition of states dedicated to the common goal of forcing the withdrawal of Vietnamese occupation forces from Cambodia. To achieve and maintain this coalition, Beijing was prepared to compromise on a number of issues. From the outset, the key members of this coalition, the ASEAN alliance and the United States, had refused to assign the Khmer Rouge a leading role in the anti-Vietnamese resistance movement in Cambodia. Chinese leaders, with a view of the world perhaps more imbued with realpolitik, have appeared to be somewhat puzzled by the depth of the distaste abroad for Pol Pot and his henchmen, but have been willing to make a number of concessions in order to keep the united front intact. They have acquiesced in an arrangement that, at least in public, has given the Pol Pot faction a subordinate role in the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea. They have publicly stated their willingness to support free elections leading to the formation of a parliamentary form of government in Cambodia and have declared that conditions in that country were not ripe for the imposition of a government based on Marxist–Leninist principles.* They have also expressed their support for the creation of a neutralist, non-aligned Cambodia and disavowed any desire to dominate the country in the future. To alleviate ASEAN fears of its intentions, China has promised not to support revolutions in the region, although it has refused to cut its ties to local communist parties.

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* One foreign affairs analyst in Beijing told me that Le Duan, lacking any experience in China, was fundamentally uncultured as well as anti-Chinese.

Beijing's willingness to make such concessions has been a major factor in keeping the coalition intact. Yet there is a lingering suspicion in many ASEAN quarters about the sincerity of Chinese pronouncements and the nature of China's long-term intentions in Southeast Asia. Some point to the fact that Chinese policymakers see the concept of the united front as a tactical weapon, to be abandoned once the immediate object of isolating and destroying the main adversary has been achieved. In that interpretation, Beijing will abandon its policy of conciliating the interests of smaller states in Southeast Asia once Hanoi has been brought to heel. Although such suspicions have been submerged in the interests of maintaining the unity of the anti-Vietnamese coalition, they continue to surface periodically and raise serious doubts among observers as to the staying power of the coalition. In a March 1985 interview in Washington, D.C., a Chinese diplomatic official conceded that the commitment of some ASEAN states to the coalition strategy is weak and could break down. In such a case, he insisted, China would be forced to rely on its bilateral relationship with Thailand. Thailand, he pointed out, is the only nation in ASEAN vital to the success of China's strategy, and it is firmly committed to the cause.

Hanoi's Strategy: Outwait China

Hanoi's strategy, like that of China, is essentially long-range in its projections. As with Beijing, the key lies inside Cambodia. If the internal situation there could be stabilized and the armed forces of the

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* For references citing China's advice to the Pol Pot leadership shortly after the fall of Phnom Penh, see Duiker, 1986, p. 98.

People's Republic of Kampuchea strengthened sufficiently to take over the problem of maintaining internal security, Vietnamese occupation forces could be gradually withdrawn and the world-wide condemnation of Hanoi's action would quickly subside. As for the Sino–ASEAN alliance, Vietnamese leaders probably calculated that the ASEAN states would soon tire of the struggle and agree to a negotiated settlement based on conditions favorable to the Vietnamese. Then Hanoi could settle down to outwait China.

Inside Cambodia, then, the Vietnamese concentrated on building up the People's Republic of Kampuchea, its institutions, its armed forces, its revolutionary party (now renamed the Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Party), and its legitimacy within the population. Vietnamese advisers were placed at all levels to instruct their Khmer counterparts on how to carry out nation-building, Leninist style. Under Hanoi's prodding, the Phnom Penh regime put into operation a moderate policy designed to win popular support and lay the foundations for a gradual transition to socialism in the 1990s. Similar efforts were underway in Laos, where the substantial number of Vietnamese troops and civilian advisers was a visible manifestation of the ever tighter links between the two countries. In the meantime, the Vietnamese began to build up the political, economic, and military ties among the three countries in an effort to bring into being the promised "intimate alliance" of all three Indochinese states.

In the diplomatic arena, the Vietnamese adopted their familiar strategy of "fighting and negotiating," offering cosmetic concessions on relatively minor concerns related to the modalities of a conference, in an effort to divide their adversaries, while holding firm on issues of importance to the maintenance of their authority in Cambodia. In the meantime, Hanoi kept up the pressure on the battlefield, maintaining over 100,000 Vietnamese troops inside the country in an effort to reduce the size and effectiveness of the rebel forces.

By 1984, certain patterns were clear. With Vietnamese help, the People's Republic of Kampuchea had managed to bring about a measure of political stability and economic recovery. On the other hand, the resistance forces had achieved more staying power than many observers had anticipated and, in the eyes of some, threatened to pose a credible political and military threat to the Phnom Penh regime. To the Vietnamese, such a development could have several unfortunate consequences. Not only would it shake the legitimacy of the People's Republic of Kampuchea and delay the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces, it would also build up the confidence of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea and its external supporters.

The 1984–1985 Vietnamese Offensive

It was undoubtedly in an effort to break that impending stalemate that Hanoi launched its heaviest offensive in years against resistance forces along the Thai border during the winter of 1984–1985. In a number of respects, the operation was a success. The destruction of rebel base areas along the Thai–Cambodian frontier severely reduced the military effectiveness of the non-communist resistance forces, who were dependent on links with refugee camps on the Thai side of the border, and forced the leadership to adopt a new guerrilla strategy focussed on the interior of the country.

The offensive also posed a severe challenge to China. Previously China had responded to major Vietnamese operations in Cambodia with attacks along the Sino–Vietnamese border. Such tactics apparently had little effect on Hanoi, which had built up its border defenses through the creation of so-called "combat districts" along the frontier. In launching its offensive on rebel camps along the Thai border, the Vietnamese appeared to be calling China's bluff, and the latter's failure to make a commensurate response, despite warnings by Chinese Foreign Minister Wu Xueqian that China might have to administer its long-threatened "second lesson," inspired comment that Beijing may have begun to rethink its strategy.

Chinese sources denied any change of approach toward the Cambodian issue, and there were no indications of a debate over Vietnam policy within the Chinese leadership. But in the next few months there were signs that Beijing was shifting the focus of its effort from the military to the diplomatic arena. Since the opening of talks to seek an improvement in Sino–Soviet relations in 1979, China had insisted that the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia was one of the three primary obstacles to better ties with Moscow. In so doing, the Chinese were clearly testing the strength of the Soviet–Vietnamese relationship, for there had been persistent reports that Soviet leaders were unhappy at the lack of progress in resolving the Cambodian dispute. While the existing situation did provide certain benefits to the U.S.S.R.—notably the use of military facilities on the South

China Sea—it also represented a financial drain on the Soviet Union and complicated Soviet relations with other countries in Southeast Asia, as well as with China itself. But Moscow would not take the bait, and Soviet negotiators refused to discuss the Cambodian issue at the Sino–Soviet talks on the grounds that questions relating to "third countries" could not be raised.

After the Vietnamese border offensive, however, Chinese sources began to hint at the possibility of a more flexible approach on the issue. In the spring of 1985, Deng Xiaoping indicated that although the "three obstacles" remained an impediment to an improvement in Sino–Soviet relations, they could be removed gradually. Moreover, he noted, the Soviet Union could still retain the bases provided by Vietnam (*Nations*, p. 16). There were also reports that China was privately offering inducements to shake Hanoi from its hardline position. On August 6, 1986, the *New York Times* reported that, according to Prince Sihanouk, Chinese sources told him during the early summer of 1986 that Beijing was prepared to order a reduction in the size of the Khmer Rouge guerrilla forces after a Vietnamese withdrawal and would offer "tremendous" economic assistance to Vietnam in such a contingency. Beijing also sent what some observers interpreted as a peace signal to Hanoi, in accepting an invitation from the government of Laos to send a vice foreign minister to visit Vientiane early in 1987. In public, China has maintained its uncompromising position on Cambodia. The *Beijing Review* reported on December 8, 1986, that in talks with Thai Foreign Minister Savetsila in November 1986, a Chinese spokesmen had said that a Vietnamese withdrawal and the restoration of Cambodia's national independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity were "non-negotiable."

Conciliatory Gestures from Moscow

During the summer and fall of 1986, there were no major overtures from Hanoi, where party leaders were preoccupied with the succession issue following the death of General Secretary Le Duan. But there were conciliatory gestures from Moscow, where the new Soviet leadership under Mikhail Gorbachev had launched a number of initiatives to break the Cold War deadlock in Asia. In his speech in Vladivostok in July, Gorbachev, while not specifically mentioning the Vietnamese presence in Cambodia, appeared to equate the interests of China and Vietnam in the region and called for Sino–Vietnamese peace talks to remove "unnecessary suspicion and distrust." China responded in September. In an interview filmed on television in the United States, Deng Xiaoping commented that Gorbachev's speech had contained "new and positive elements," although it had avoided the "big step" of promising to end the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia. Deng also hinted that the Cambodian issue need not be a major hindrance to an improvement in Sino–Soviet relations, equating the "three obstacles" to the U.S. occupation of Taiwan (Chanda, "Diplomacy on the Air," p. 26).

Moscow carried the dialogue another step forward in October, when the Soviet negotiator at the ninth round of the Sino–Soviet normalization talks reportedly declared that the problem could be raised in the next round of talks. Whether or not this was a signal to Hanoi is not certain, but a few days later, Sihanouk reported that Vietnamese official sources had hinted that the Hanoi regime would no longer insist on the elimination of the "genocidal Pol Pot clique" as a basis for a settlement in Cambodia and might agree to the presence of representatives of the Khmer Rouge at a peace conference to discuss the issue. Shortly after, Truong Chinh, the new general secretary of the Vietnamese Communist Party, visited Moscow, where the two sides reported "total unanimity on issues relating to domestic and foreign affairs* (Chanda, "Communist Compromise," pp. 14–15).

The Sixth National Congress of the Vietnamese Communist Party, held in December 1986,. was widely anticipated, as observers searched for possible shifts in Vietnam's foreign policy as the party prepared to install a new leadership for the coming years. The congress elected a new general secretary—party veteran Nguyen Van Linh—and introduced a number of new faces to the Politburo. But there were no major new initiatives in the Cambodian dispute or on the subject of relations with China. The overall tone of official statements on foreign policy issues was relatively conciliatory, but noncommittal. On the tangled issue of Sino–Vietnamese relations, the political report presented at the congress simply remarked that the time had come "for the two sides to enter into negotiations to solve both immediate and long-term problems." But party leaders seemed sensitive to suggestions that Moscow was not giving Hanoi full backing. At a press conference held during the congress, Vice Foreign Minister Vo Dong Giang, while calling for improved relations with Beijing, warned China that its effort to use the Sino–Soviet talks to force a change in the Vietnamese position was a "daydream." The Soviet Union, he said, "has never undermined the interests of a third nation."

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* In early 1987 Vietnamese sources denied the report that they were willing to attend a conference with the Khmer Rouge and reiterated their original position.

Unravelling the Knot: Prospects for a Settlement

As 1986 came to an end, the Sino–Vietnamese conflict over Indochina appeared little nearer to a comprehensive solution than it had been at the moment when Chinese forces crossed the Vietnamese border in February 1979. Indeed, it seemed possible that the dispute had become more difficult to solve since it had now become tangled in the broader skein of the Great Power rivalry in Asia.

Given the strategic importance of the area and the pervasive nature of Cold War interests in the Pacific region, it is indeed likely that, at least in an indirect sense, the interests of the major world powers must be addressed in any final settlement of the dispute over Indochina. Ultimately, however, it is in the complex relationship between China and Vietnam that one must seek the crux of the dispute, and the key to its resolution. And here it is clear that, although it was the Cambodian issue that was most directly responsible for causing the 1979 war, the conflict between China and Vietnam is the product of a number of additional factors, some of them deeply rooted in history. To unravel the knot and assess the prospects for a settlement, then, it is necessary to investigate the political, psychological, and historical factors involved in the mutual perceptions of the two countries as well the role that Indochina plays in that relationship.

Vietnam and Indochina—Importance of the Special Relationship

In assessing the role of Indochina in the foreign policies of China and Vietnam, it is almost certainly easier to deal with the latter. Of all the issues that have emerged in Vietnamese foreign policy since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, it is arguable that the "special relationship" with Laos and Cambodia is viewed in Hanoi as the most important.*

As we have seen, this was not always the case. During the early years of the Indochinese Communist Party, party leaders viewed the concept of Indochina in a somewhat abstract manner and certainly subordinate in importance to achieving national independence and seizing power in Vietnam. But the idea of an alliance among the Indochinese states quickly assumed importance in the context of the growing struggle against the French. The significance of Laos and Cambodia to Vietnamese national security was graphically demonstrated during the Second Indochina War, and it was probably at this time that the concept became an article of faith in Vietnamese strategic thinking.

Following the seizure of Saigon in April 1975, the regime quickly indicated that a "special relationship" with the new revolutionary regimes in Laos and Cambodia would be one of the cornerstones of Vietnamese foreign policy in the postwar era. Vietnamese leaders were certainly aware that there was opposition to the idea in Beijing and Phnom Penh but evidently did not view such opposition as a serious impediment to their plans. Initially they adopted a relatively tolerant approach toward the Pol Pot regime, although Vietnamese negotiators probably made it clear to their Cambodian counterparts that the formation of an Indochinese alliance was not subject to debate.**

The events of the late 1970s transformed Hanoi's vague suspicions of Chinese intentions in Indochina into the conviction that Beijing was determined to use Cambodia as a bludgeon to force the Vietnamese to submit to Chinese authority. China's behavior undoubtedly revived the deep-seated Vietnamese historical distrust of its great neighbor and convinced Hanoi that the integration of the three

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* For a listing of Vietnamese foreign policy goals, see the speech by Le Duan.

** According to one reporter, a Vietnamese official remarked to him that "naturally, we insist on special relations because we shared everything during the war" (Paringaux).

Indochinese states into an intimate alliance was absolutely essential to Vietnamese survival. This uncompromising attitude has been reflected in Hanoi's negotiating stance since the overthrow of the Pol Pot regime in early 1979.

Since the beginning of the revolutionary struggle against the French in the colonial period, concern for national security has probably been the single most important factor in determining the Hanoi regime's attitude toward its neighbors in Indochina. To the party's veteran leadership, historical experience provides ample proof that Vietnam must be ever watchful for threats to its national sovereignty and integrity, from whatever direction.

But it is clear that there is more involved in the formulation of Vietnamese policy toward Indochina than the sole question of national survival. In formulating and implementing foreign policy, Vietnamese leaders, like their counterparts elsewhere, are influenced not only by questions of national security, but also by questions of history and ideology. Foreign policy is not conceptualized in a vacuum, but in the context of a series of self-images shaped by historical experience, concerns for national destiny and prestige, and world view.

How important is "history" in the formulation of foreign policy in Hanoi? Vietnamese leaders today certainly do not view themselves simply as the direct linear descendants of the imperial rulers of the past, whose feudalist policies they view through the prism of the Marxist–Leninist historical dialectic. But the Vietnamese struggle for national liberation against France and the United States led the party to seek and proclaim a direct relationship with the heroic figures of the past, from the Trung sisters to Tran Hung Dao and the Confucian strategist Nguyen Trai. While the regime's deliberate linkage of past and present was undoubtedly designed to mobilize popular support for the war effort in the South, there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of the party's vision of itself as the most recent defender of the sacred cause of national independence. This sense of a historical continuum was undoubtedly sharpened when Hanoi began to focus its attention on the challenge from the north, since most of the great patriotic figures in Vietnamese history were identified with the national struggle against Chinese domination. In fact, as relations between the two countries began to deteriorate in the 1970s, Vietnam used press references to Chinese misbehavior in the past as a means of signalling its displeasure with current policy in Beijing.*

Hanoi's use of historical imagery appears to extend into Vietnamese relations with Laos and Cambodia. As a dynamic force on the mainland since the restoration of independence from the Tang dynasty in the tenth century, the Vietnamese empire asserted its suzerainty over its neighbors to the west and constructed a tributary system in mainland Southeast Asia similar in form (if smaller in scope) to that maintained by the Celestial Emperor in Beijing. Vietnamese leaders today do not assert their right to hegemony in Indochina because of such historical relationships, of course. But Hanoi's tacit assertion of a directing role in defending its smaller neighbors against the prevailing danger of Chinese expansionism, as well as its attempt to provide a model for the building of socialism throughout Indochina, undoubtedly reflect the Vietnamese self-image as a leading force, culturally as well as politically and militarily, in the region.

Such historical images are supplemented by ideology. It has often been stated that Vietnamese party leaders were motivated during the Vietnam War more by nationalism than by a commitment to global revolution. Whether or not that is the case, it would be a mistake to underestimate the influence of the Marxist–Leninist world view on the mindset of party leaders in Hanoi. Vietnam's veteran leadership is deeply imbued with the Leninist vision of a world divided between progressive socialist forces and the reactionary forces of world imperialism led by the United States. In that vision, the victory of the Vietnamese revolution marked a watershed in the struggle of the oppressed peoples of Southeast Asia for national independence, democracy, and socialism, while Vietnam today represents the vanguard for the coming social revolution in the region. To what extent Marxist doctrine actually influences the formulation of foreign policy, of course, is open to debate. Future leaders may follow the example of China and see the utility of subordinating ideological themes to developmental ones. So long as ideology can be put to fruitful use in seeking and justifying national objectives, however, it will be a meaningful factor in Vietnamese foreign policy.*

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* Shortly after the outbreak of the Sino–Vietnamese conflict in 1979, a Vietnamese official remarked it was much easier to mobilize popular support for a war effort against China than it had been against the United States.

In Indochina, ideology thus strengthens the imperatives of history and national survival. Where party leaders in the 1930s doubted the revolutionary potential of the more primitive societies in Laos and Cambodia, their counterparts today adopt the social Darwinist view that the Vietnamese, more advanced in the struggle to build a communist society, can assist Phnom Penh and Vientiane in passing from feudal backwardness through the complex transitional process of socialist transformation. And the integration of Laos and Cambodia into the more advanced Vietnamese society will be beneficial to all three, not only in terms of national defense, but also in terms of the joint struggle to build an advanced socialist society throughout Indochina.

For the Vietnamese, then, Indochina lies at the point where the demands of history, of ideology, and of national security intersect. Historical imagery and Marxist–Leninist doctrine are put to use to buttress the national interest. The result can be seen in the contention by Vietnamese spokesmen such as General Le Duc Anh that revolutionary experience, geography, and Marxist historicity have created a "revolutionary law" that knits the states of Indochina into a militant alliance, and a common struggle to build the communist utopia.**

China and Indochina—Seeking a Stable Outer Frontier

One of the key factors in Hanoi's insistence on the importance of the militant alliance of the Indochinese states is the alleged threat of Chinese expansion into the area. The Vietnamese see China's drive to the south as an almost primordial urge inherited by Beijing's "new emperors" from the imperial past and contend that, in struggling against it, they are fighting a battle for all of Southeast Asia. In this view, communicated to me in an interview of a Vietnamese researcher at the Institute of International Relations in Hanoi in December 1985, the two prongs of Chinese strategy are the attempt to take over Indonesia (an attempt which failed at the time of the

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* For a discussion of the role of ideology in Vietnamese foreign policy, see Duiker, 1985, Chapter 5.

** For a discussion of the "revolutionary law," see Chanda, p. 374.

Gestapu revolt in 1965) and the current effort to subjugate Vietnam and impose Chinese influence on the Indochinese states.

How valid is this image? Is Hanoi correct in asserting that behind Beijing's alleged concern for the sovereignty and national independence of Laos and Cambodia lies a long-term plan held by Chinese leaders to achieve hegemony in Southeast Asia and turn the South China Sea into a Chinese lake? Although Hanoi's apocalyptic view is understandable, it is more difficult to evaluate China's motives in Southeast Asia than those of the Vietnamese. In the first place, Chinese foreign policy objectives are arguably more complex than those held in Hanoi. Where Vietnamese foreign policy operates essentially within a regional framework, Chinese leaders formulate their options within the global arena. In fact, some observers of contemporary Chinese politics contend that, although China today does not view itself as a Great Power, the relationship between China, the United States and the Soviet Union is the primary determinant in Chinese foreign policymaking.* Whether or not that is the case, it is certainly true that while Southeast Asia is a vital security area for Hanoi, it is only one of many areas of concern to Beijing.

Another reason for the difficulty in analyzing Chinese foreign policy toward Indochina is that China is attempting to change the status quo rather than to maintain it. Where Vietnamese objectives in Indochina can be assessed—at least to a reasonable degree—on the basis of Hanoi's current behavior there, China's current policy toward the region is focused on the effort to mobilize support to achieve a change in the situation. As Hanoi would be the first to point out, under such circumstances Chinese leaders will obviously state their long-term objectives in such a way as to reassure other states in the region.

For these reasons, any effort to assess China's Indochina policy must take into account a number of issues. First, what is the relative importance of national security, historical imperative, and ideology in the formulation of Chinese foreign policy toward Southeast Asia? Second, what is the relative importance of Indochina in Chinese foreign policy compared to other regions, and how is China's policy toward Indochina affected by its relations with the Great Powers?

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* For an analysis of the global focus of Chinese foreign policy, see Levine.

Finally, to what degree do current Chinese statements about Indochina predict its probable behavior under possible contingencies in the future?

For China, as for Vietnam, national security is undoubtedly the primary determinant in foreign policy. Both countries were victimized and humiliated by Western powers during the imperialist era, and the current regimes in both Beijing and Hanoi have dedicated themselves to wiping out the imperialist legacy and reconstructing a solid defensive perimeter as a means of guaranteeing national survival. The reconstruction of this defensive perimeter was certainly the driving force in Chinese foreign policy following the rise of the Chinese Communist Party to power in 1949, as Beijing attempted to reassert its influence in such diverse areas as Korea, Taiwan, Manchuria, and Tibet, as well as in mainland Southeast Asia. The level of threat to Chinese national security has undoubtedly receded somewhat in recent years, but Chinese leaders remain sensitive to what they consider the "hegemonistic" designs of the Soviet Union in Asia. So long as the protective mantle of the historical "outer frontier" has not been secured, what Robert Sutter has termed the "trauma of imperialism" will remain fresh (Sutter, 1986, p. 4).

As in the case of Vietnam, however, Chinese foreign policy is also influenced by questions of history and ideology. Of course, for China, unlike Vietnam, "history" has been a dubious ally and model to party leaders in their struggle to build an advanced socialist society. Chinese radicals attempted to eradicate the legacy of the past during the Cultural Revolution, something that Vietnamese Communist Party leaders never attempted to do and apparently considered ridiculous. In the field of foreign policy, however, Chinese Communist Party leaders of all factions appeared to support—albeit not necessarily with conscious intent—many of the classical objectives of Chinese foreign policy during the traditional period, including the vision of China as an influential if not dominant actor in Asian politics and a model for the internal development of other states in the region.*

In the recent past, this vision of a new China reconstituting the moral and political universe of the imperial age was buttressed by revolutionary ideology. Under Mao Zedong, Chinese foreign policy often possessed a strong ideological component, projecting the image of China as a vanguard leading the oppressed peoples of the world against the forces of global imperialism. Like Hanoi, Beijing found Marxist–Leninist doctrine a useful tool in the formulation of foreign policy. The current leadership under Deng Xiaoping, however, has deliberately reduced the role of ideology in contemporary foreign policy in order to promote economic modernization and soothe the fears of its ASEAN allies. Although it is of course possible that China will return to a more ideological view of the world, China's need for regional support in its current policy in Indochina serves as a strong deterrent to such an eventuality.

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* An interesting analysis of the historical factors in Chinese foreign policy appears in Hunt, Chapter 1.

Where does Indochina—and beyond Indochina, Southeast Asia—fit into this framework? In the view of one seasoned observer of the East Asian regional scene, Southeast Asia is probably viewed in Beijing as an area of significant, but not crucial, importance in Chinese foreign policy.* During the imperial period it was rarely a source of serious threat to the empire. After the rise of the Chinese Communist Party to power in 1949, it assumed a higher level of importance because of the specter of growing U.S. military involvement in the area. That concern reached a peak during the 1960s, when the conflict in South Vietnam threatened to engulf China and the United States in a direct military confrontation. And since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, China has clearly been sensitive to the danger that Soviet military power would fill the vacuum left by the departure of the United States. Insofar as Chinese leaders today are determined to restore control over the traditional "outer frontier," mainland Southeast Asia—and specifically the states of Indochina, traditionally the most important part of Southeast Asia in Chinese calculations—will be viewed as an essential component in China's national defense.

Yet Chinese behavior in recent years clearly indicates that the Deng Xiaoping leadership does not view control over, or influence in the area to be of sufficient importance to justify direct military involvement. Although the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in 1978 led to the brief Sino–Vietnamese border war early the following year,

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* Levine (p. 120) estimates that China recognizes the following priorities: 1) Northeast Asia, 2) Southeast Asia, 3) South Asia, and 4) Southwest Asia.

Beijing's objective was clearly designed to "teach Hanoi a lesson" rather than to reverse the verdict in Phnom Penh. And today, where Hanoi has subordinated all other interests to the maintenance of the special relationship, China has placed its concerns about Indochina beneath those of economic modernization and a non-threatening situation in foreign affairs. In fact, Chinese leaders appear satisfied to place Indochina on the agenda for future action (as in the case of Taiwan), when conditions permit. For the moment, Beijing appears willing to tolerate the Vietnamese presence in Laos and Cambodia and may even welcome it as a means of isolating Vietnam and draining it of resources needed for internal economic development. Significantly Beijing has not made the Soviet military presence in Vietnam a major obstacle to normalization, stating publicly on several occasions that China views the Soviet bases at Danang and Camranh Bay as established primarily for the purpose of countering U.S. military power in the region.*

What, then, are China's ultimate intentions in Indochina? Are its protestations that it has no national aspirations in the area to be taken seriously, or, as Hanoi appears to believe, should they be viewed as a temporary tactic to beguile credulous allies? Based on currently available evidence China today appears to have no desire (and does not possess the capability) to absorb the states of Indochina into a resurrected Chinese empire. Rather China seems to have accepted the verdict of history that the tributary relationship of the imperial era has been superseded in Southeast Asia by a system of independent states. But Southeast Asia—and Indochina in particular—still retains considerable importance in Chinese foreign policy, not only as a stable "outer frontier" but also in a symbolic sense. China probably intends to become a major actor on the Southeast Asian political scene, much like the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe and the United States in the Western hemisphere. Looking ahead, Chinese leaders may envision the creation of a stable alliance system of independent states under Chinese tutelage. That would be the ideal. At a minimum, Chinese strategists undoubtedly hope to neutralize the area and remove it from the arena of Great Power rivalry, thus permitting a revived China to play the role of a benign protector of the smaller states in the region. Vietnamese power, and China's own weakness, make such a vision unachievable for the foreseeable future. But in foreign policy terms, as in the sphere of economic development, the current regime in Beijing is planning for the distant future.

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* For a recent statement, see Nations.

Short-Range Prospects

What, then, are the short-range prospects for Indochina? It has been eight years since the outbreak of the Sino–Vietnamese war. During that time there has been little change on the battlefield or at the bargaining table as both Hanoi and Beijing have held essentially to the long-range strategy each adopted at the outset of the conflict. Both regimes, in fact, act as though the dispute will be an extended one. The Vietnamese describe Chinese expansionist goals in Southeast Asia as historically-based and insatiable. Chinese leaders, while periodically offering to allow the Vietnamese lost sheep back into the fold, appear to believe that only an extended period of isolation and heavy pressure will end what they view as the intransigence in Hanoi.

That does not mean, of course, that there are not good reasons for both Hanoi and Beijing to seek an end to the dispute. For the Vietnamese, perhaps, the costs are severe. The occupation of Cambodia has had an enormous impact on Hanoi's effort to promote internal economic development, not only because of the burden of national defense expenditures, but also because of the boycott which Western nations have imposed on trade with Vietnam. The party's veteran leadership under Le Duan, imbued with a siege mentality as a result of the experience of the Vietnam War, was willing to pay that price to achieve its security objectives in Indochina. A new generation of leaders emerging in the 1990s may find the cost of total security excessive and seek a compromise settlement. They will probably be encouraged to do so by the Soviet Union, which finds the Cambodian dispute an obstacle to the realization of many of its own objectives in Asia. Although there is no clear evidence that the U.S.S.R. has pressured Hanoi to moderate its negotiating position—in his recent visit to Indochina, Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze voiced full support for recent Vietnamese proposals on Cambodia—Moscow's new willingness to discuss the issue suggests that under certain circumstances the Soviet Union might be willing to play a mediating role in the dispute.*

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* Shevardnadze's visit to Southeast Asia is analyzed by Hiebert, p. 17.

China is under less pressure to settle the dispute, since its own efforts are relatively cost-free. Still, the current situation has had some unfortunate side effects in Chinese foreign policy, notably in encouraging Hanoi's virtual total dependence upon the Soviet Union, as well as in posing an obstacle to China's effort to improve its own relations with Moscow. Chinese leaders may be tempted to make minor concessions on the issue to induce an inexperienced leadership in Hanoi to trade the "special relationship" for an end to the conflict.

An overall settlement, however, appears unlikely for the foreseeable future. Indochina today lies at the intersection of the resurgent force of two dynamic nationalist movements. Both China and Vietnam are anxious to secure the fruits of their own social revolution and realize their own vision of national destiny. Each has passed through a period of national humiliation and is determined to achieve self-determination and its natural frontiers. So far, it is the Vietnamese who have had their way, primarily because of their willingness to assign absolute priority to the issue. China, however, has the patience, the determination, and the resources to play a long-term game, and is undoubtedly counting on the passage of time to reassert its own interests in the region. Chinese leaders also calculate that the rising force of nationalist sentiment inside Laos and Cambodia itself will compel the Vietnamese to relinquish their grasp on the two countries. But Beijing's primary objective is to change the minds of Vietnamese leaders in Hanoi and persuade them to return to the "lips and teeth" association that—at least in Chinese eyes—had characterized relations between the two countries during the precolonial era.

In sum, it is not a problem susceptible to easy solution. Perhaps in the long run, both of the protagonists will find it useful to learn from history. Chinese leaders should recognize that even during the period when the Red River delta was under Chinese rule, the Celestial Empire never exercised control over all of Indochina. They might also recall that the attempts of past rulers to intimidate Vietnam have had little success but, to the contrary, have strengthened the determination of the Vietnamese to maintain their independence. As for Hanoi, Vietnamese leaders could learn as well from their great statesmen-patriots of the past, such as Nguyen Trai, who discovered that, in the long run, Vietnam must always come to an accommodation with China. And both could profit from one of the lessons of our own day, when even the Great Powers are beginning to discover that the effort to dominate smaller neighbors can be a costly and even fruitless enterprise.

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ASEAN's Neighborhood

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The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was for so long belittled and is now so glibly taken for granted that its dramatic meaning is often glossed over: ASEAN is nothing less than a revolutionary reconfiguration of Southeast Asia. Regional states have never before formed a community such as the one formed in 1967 by Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand (Brunei joined in 1984). Pre-modern Southeast Asian kingdoms were rivals, and so were the predator Europeans who formed colonies there (everywhere but Thailand) in the modern era. Leaders of the newly independent nation states that emerged following World War II inherited old habits of mutual suspicion and rivalry and also of ignorance about their neighbors. Only in the past twenty years has an alternative mentality come to the fore through ASEAN. Although ASEAN has grown by fits and starts and continues to disappoint its promoters—especially where economic cooperation is concerned—its overall advantages have proved to be compellingly attractive to its members, so much so that the preservation and strengthening of the association itself has become a primary consideration of state.

The very existence of ASEAN demonstrates that its member states have managed to come to terms with each other. But they are not alone in the neighborhood. Indeed, among the forces compelling them into cooperation was the rise to power in neighboring Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia of regimes which they viewed as ideologically offensive and potentially dangerous, all the more so because of the suspected regional ambitions of communist Indochina's powerful international patrons, the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. In one sense, Western-leaning ASEAN was Southeast Asia's non-communist bloc. But as the fissures between the Soviet Union and China, and between Vietnam and Cambodia muddied the ideological waters, the real underpinnings of ASEAN unity became clearer: these were considerations of national and regional security. The approach of the ASEAN states to Vietnam and the crisis of Cambodia illustrates this and reveals ASEAN as a profoundly important regional institution.

ASEAN: A New Way of Thinking about the Region

The idea of ASEAN emerged from the modern awareness that the various states and societies of Southeast Asia constitute a distinct neighborhood within the global community. In earlier centuries, enduring attitudes of animosity between one society and the next, combined with predatory habits—as most states sought routinely to extend their sway or shore up their frontiers at the expense of weaker neighbors—obscured this fact. Modern colonialism balkanized Southeast Asia in another way, subsuming often artificial collections of indigenous societies into imperial systems managed from London, Paris, Madrid, Washington, and the Hague. As new nation states emerged from within the cocoon of colonies, their respective elites seemed to have little in common one with the other. The climate of the times exaggerated differences in ideology and in patterns of acculturation to the West. Not surprisingly their leaders relied upon intuitions of the past and upon their particular colonial experience; suspecting their nearest neighbors, most of them sought security for their vulnerable states in a variety of post- colonial *external* "communities" and alignments, through the British Commonwealth, the Free World, or the Socialist Bloc. Only when these communities proved unreliable did some of Southeast Asia's leaders begin to think in terms of the region *as a region*.

Two attempts to form associations of cooperating neighbor states with exclusively Southeast Asian memberships failed in the early 1960s. Both the Association of Southeast Asia (A.S.A.) (Thailand, the Philippines, and the Federation of Malaya) and Maphilindo (Indonesia, Malaya, and the Philippines) foundered when the loose ends of Britain's Southeast Asian empire, minus Brunei, were gathered together to form Malaysia in 1963. In the Philippines, President Diosdado Macapagal claimed that one of Malaysia's new states, Sabah, formerly British North Borneo, was by tradition and treaty actually Philippine territory; and from Indonesia, President Sukarno attacked Malaysia as a neo-imperialist concoction and launched an ideology-driven assault upon the new state. This was Confrontation. When General Suharto and his fellow military men assumed power in Indonesia after 1965, having eliminated the Indonesian communists and pushed Sukarno aside, they were eager to bring their state into concord with the rest of the neighborhood. No longer a regional provocateur, Indonesia now took the lead in the next attempt to form a regional association. In 1967, Indonesia's Foreign Minister, Adam Malik, joined senior officials from Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore (which had separated from Malaysia in 1965) to form ASEAN. Convening in Bangkok, they signed a declaration calling for "regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and the rule of law in the relationship among countries of the region."

The creation of ASEAN did not wash away longstanding conflicts among its constituent societies, but, as it matured, ASEAN provided a new structure within which such conflicts could be negotiated and contained. What is more, ASEAN became the institutional vehicle for the spread of a new way of thinking about the region, the fundamental idea of which was that the stability and security of each nation in the region affects the stability and security of all. From the beginning a major function of ASEAN was to reinforce a code of neighborly behavior. This involved a willingness to cooperate on issues of mutual interest or conflict, but at its heart was a simple promise: to respect each other's "independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity and national identity." This promise, made explicit by the 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, provided welcome assurances to the signatories that the vulnerable nation states over which they presided would not be subject to subversions or assaults from *each other*.

ASEAN's founders also promoted the concept of regional autonomy. This idea arose, first in Indonesia, in response to another historical reality: that Southeast Asian societies have been appallingly vulnerable to predators from the *outside*. Aside from the Thais, none of ASEAN's ministers and heads of state had been born in an independent state. (The same was true for Southeast Asia's non-ASEAN leaders as well.) Although Southeast Asians now enjoyed political autonomy, prudence and economic necessity still compelled the new states to link up with big powers, and, in doing so, to subordinate themselves within one camp or another in the Cold War. In this respect, the ASEAN states were all firmly anti-communist. Four of the five had formal defense arrangements with Western protectors: Malaysia and Singapore with Britain; Thailand and the Philippines with the United States. And even though Suharto's Indonesia steered clear of formal alliances, it placed itself unabashedly in the Western camp nevertheless. The anti-communism of ASEAN's political elites was genuine. Malaya, the Philippines, and Singapore had confronted internal Marxist-led challenges to the state, and Suharto's rise to power in Indonesia was popularly legitimized on the basis of his having "saved" his country from its communists. Thai leaders also confronted subversive Thai communists, and, in collaboration with American war aims in Vietnam, sought to facilitate a non-communist resolution to the turbulence in Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam.

Powerful Friends and Powerful Enemies

Many of ASEAN's founders were aware that, however necessary they may be, powerful friends could be just as dangerous as powerful enemies. Countless historical memories bore this out. The British colonization of Malaya, for example, began when the Sultan of Kedah ceded Penang Island to the British in return for protection from the Thais. In modern times small states could still be drawn unwittingly as local pawns into global contests; witness Vietnam, split in two with each half supported by competing Cold War heavyweights. The national interests of big states and small states were never fully complementary, nor could they be. As a result, small states were easily taken advantage of, and when policies changed in distant capitals, they could suddenly be left in the lurch at home. It was best to be free of such entanglements.

This perspective achieved its fullest articulation in newly independent Indonesia where President Sukarno and Vice President Mohammed Hatta called for a foreign policy that affirmed Indonesia's autonomy from compromising alliances and in which Indonesia would assert itself as an active player in regional and world affairs—*bebas aktif*, free and active! Suharto was in thorough agreement with Sukarno in rejecting major power interferences in Southeast Asia—he viewed Sukarno's dalliance with Beijing as a dangerous deviation from the principle. In supporting the establishment of ASEAN he envisioned an "integrated Southeast Asia" standing "strongly in facing outside influences and intervention from whatever quarter . . . " (quoted in Liefer, p. 119). His foreign minister put it more bluntly: What was wanted, said Adam Malik, was the end to "all foreign . . . domination and interference" in order to stem "the *yellow* as well as the *white* imperialism in Southeast Asia" (quoted in D. Solidum, p. 56).

In the late 1960s the behavior of ASEAN's Free World protectors tended to bear out this point of view. The territorial defenses of Malaysia and Singapore had been provided for by the United Kingdom in a series of colonial and post- colonial pacts and reinforced by British and Commonwealth forces stationed locally. As a colonial power Britain had suppressed Malaya's communists in the 1950s; and in the early 1960s Commonwealth forces had shielded fledgling Malaysia from Indonesia. But Britain's decision to withdraw its eastern forces, announced in 1967 and executed in the early 1970s, alerted the leaders of Malaysia and Singapore to the transience of big power guarantees. A new pact, the Five Power Defense Arrangement with the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, and Singapore, provided defense assurances from Commonwealth parties. Even so, Britain's ex-Southeast Asian colonies now began moving in the direction of non-alignment and of clearer collaboration with their ASEAN neighbors. At about the same time, President Richard Nixon promulgated the "Guam Doctrine" (1968) calling for an end to direct military involvement by the United States in Asia. This, combined with American reversals in the Vietnam War, alerted members of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) that America's presence in the region might be equally transitory. Pressures arose in the Philippines to pull back on Filipino ties to the United States, and

Thailand began, in 1969, to reduce the American military presence there.

As the defense umbrellas of the Free World began to look increasingly unreliable and impermanent the idea of regional autonomy became correspondingly attractive, and in 1971 the ASEAN partners made regional autonomy explicitly a part of ASEAN doctrine in ZOPFAN, a proposal "to secure the recognition of and respect for Southeast Asia as a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality, free from any form or manner of interferences by outside powers." In deciding for regional neutrality ASEAN rejected a Malaysian proposal, supported by Singapore, in which ASEAN's neutrality would be guaranteed by three competitive major powers—the People's Republic of China, the Soviet Union, and the United States—in favor of the Indonesian conception in which the association's members took it upon themselves to protect their own neutrality. In this view, even though ASEAN states might well take comfort from external security treaty pacts in the short run, in the long run the region should seek to rid itself of military alliances with big powers and to refrain from calling upon powerful outsiders to help settle regional disputes. ASEAN's member countries, said Indonesia's Foreign Minister Adam Malik, should "take charge of their own future and . . . reject the assumption that the fate of the region is to continue to be determined by outside forces" (quoted in Liefer, p. 149).

Malik and Suharto further proposed that this need not be a dream. What was needed was a new concept of security based upon strong national societies, states whose economies, authority structures, and national identities were so strong and mutually reinforcing that they would develop a powerful, self-protecting national *resilience*. This would prevent subversion from within and thwart predators from without, and make large and prohibitively expensive defense establishments unnecessary. A regional community based upon resilient national societies would in turn become resilient itself, especially when its members worked cooperatively toward the security of the neighborhood as a whole. Resilient nation states within a cohesive, autonomous region—this was the Indonesian vision for ASEAN, and by and large it soon became ASEAN's vision for itself.

But it *was* a vision. In reality ASEAN evolved slowly in the early years. Most important, its many committees and subcommittees cranked into bureaucratic motion to address a wide range of practical matters from a cooperative perspective: regional banking procedures, shipping regulations, postal services, monetary policy, tourism, agriculture, and trade. The products of these consultations, in the form of new proposals and agreements, coursed upward through ASEAN secretariats in each country and were eventually considered by the collective secretaries general, other ASEAN-wide councils, and finally by the foreign ministers themselves at their annual meeting. The concrete achievements emerging from this process were modest, but a collaborative machinery began to mature and ASEAN put down some region-wide bureaucratic roots.

Diplomatically, the association's members did not always go the same way; Indonesia and Singapore failed to follow the lead of the Philippines, Malaysia, and Thailand in recognizing the People's Republic of China in the mid 1970s, for example. But in other areas the ASEAN states tested their collaborative wings, initiating joint ASEAN representations to the European Economic Community (E.E.C.), the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) meetings, and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Bilaterally, they stepped up joint military exercises and intelligence sharing. Also, as the relentlessly unresolved crisis in Indochina deepened upon the withdrawal of American forces, ASEAN braced itself to deal with the consequences. At first a committee was formed to address problems of reconstruction and rehabilitation, but when South Vietnam fell at last and all Indochina came under Marxist regimes, the heads of state of ASEAN gathered personally to assess the damage and to address the future.

ASEAN after the Vietnam War

At the Bali Summit in February 1976, ASEAN's premiers and presidents pledged themselves anew to the achievement of national resilience and regional autonomy, explicitly reaffirming their commitment to ZOPFAN, and initiated new levels of economic, social, and cultural interaction. Economic ministers would now meet twice a year. On a non-ASEAN basis, they tightened their security ties. For the first time officially they also described the ASEAN countries as representing a diplomatic bloc whose members would seek to coordinate and harmonize their respective positions and, where possible, to act in concert. This resounding affirmation of ASEAN, expressed in the Declaration of ASEAN Concord, was in part a response to the unwelcome reality that Southeast Asia was now divided clearly along ideological lines. The ASEAN states feared that communist Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam might become sources of subversion against them—Thailand being most vulnerable. Both communist big powers had client states in the neighborhood, Vietnam and Laos being patronized by the Soviet Union, and Cambodia, under the control of the Khmer Rouge, by China. On the face of it, the new state of affairs in Indochina after the Vietnam War threatened both elements of ASEAN's vision—the integrity and stability of its member states; and its hopes for a regional future free from foreign intervention.

On the other hand, if Vietnam and its neighbors could be persuaded to accept the principles of community behavior and cooperation upon which ASEAN was built, then the end to Indochina's many years of turbulence and civil war could be a positive outcome for the region after all, despite communist victories. Having shored themselves up by the Declaration of ASEAN Concord, ASEAN's leaders now proceeded upon this more hopeful premise. In the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, also a product of the Bali Summit, ASEAN's heads of government promulgated a neighborhood code of conduct which asserted that a state's respect for the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of its neighbors must be absolute. Having made the pledge to each other, the ASEAN states invited "other States in Southeast Asia" to sign the treaty too.

Although Suharto's Indonesia was in many ways the most obsessively anti-communist ASEAN country where domestic policy was concerned, it had resolutely refused to be drawn into international Cold War pacts. Thailand and the Philippines had enlisted through SEATO in the United States' war effort in Vietnam, but Indonesia had maintained friendly relations with the government in Hanoi. Among Indonesians there existed a deep respect for the Vietnamese nationalists who had persevered longest and hardest to reclaim their national sovereignty. The Vietnamese were, perhaps, communists of an acceptable stripe, and Indonesia was especially keen to bring them into the neighborhood on friendly terms.

In any case, Vietnam could not be ignored. Emerging in triumph from a long bitter war, it possessed an army better equipped and immeasurably more experienced than any other in Southeast Asia, and of a size outnumbering all ASEAN forces combined. What is more, as its leaders turned their attention from war to economic reconstruction and growth, Vietnam professed to offer an alternative model for development. It would inevitably play a role of increasing importance in the region and would bid well to emerge "as one of the most dynamic powers in Southeast Asia" (Thayer, p. 229).

By 1976 other ASEAN countries joined Indonesia in attempting to facilitate good relations with Hanoi and the new governments in Laos and Cambodia—newly named Kampuchea. Under a civilian government since 1973, the Thais warmed quickly to the victorious regimes, having by then moved decisively to remove the American military presence from Thailand. Although things soured again when the military seized power back in 1976, after General Kriangsak Chomanan stepped in in 1977, Thailand consistently pursued better relations with Hanoi. Malaysia and the Philippines, joining Indonesia, opened embassies in Hanoi (although Singapore held back), and modest levels of trade and other exchanges followed. Malaysia went so far as to send technical advisers in palm oil, rubber technology, and tropical diseases to Vietnam, and, with the Philippines, even broached the idea of Vietnam's joining the association itself (Nair, p. 30). This was naive under the circumstances, and Malaysia's Foreign Minister, Tengku Ahmad Rithaudeen, soon concluded that Vietnam was not yet ready "to join ASEAN or to commit itself to . . . multilateral efforts for regional peace such as ZOPFAN" (quoted in Rajendran, p. 76). Nevertheless, Malaysia and the others continued trying to bridge the gap between the association and the Indochina states. These efforts were a response to the necessity of establishing working relationships with the new regional power. ASEAN states perceived that in the long run ideologically-based blocs would impede rather than promote regional stability. With this in mind Suharto had some years before envisioned an ASEAN that embraced *all systems*. The dust having settled as it had in Indochina, ASEAN states and the association itself moved cautiously to make the best of it.

As for the Vietnamese, in an article in the Vietnam People's Army Newspaper (*Quan Doi Nhan Dan*), they dismissed the association as a tool of "the U.S. imperialists" who were using it, in the wake of defeat, "to rally all pro-American reactionary forces to oppose revolutionary movements in Southeast Asia" (Thayer, p. 221). And they dismissed the proffered hand of ASEAN's Treaty as well. Bilaterally, however, Vietnam acted to improve its connections in the neighborhood and displayed unexpected flexibility when it established full relations with the Philippines despite American military bases there. In September and October 1978, Vietnam openly courted ASEAN states when Premier Pham Van Dong visited the ASEAN capitals personally—talking "glowingly of peace and development," as Indonesia's Mochtar Kusumaatmadja recalls (Kusumaatmadja, p. 144)—and offered treaties of friendship and non-aggression. ASEAN's wary leaders rejected these in turn. (Vietnam's deepening ties to the Soviets in 1978 alarmed ASEAN members in the same way that links to Western economies and increased arms purchases from the United States by ASEAN countries alarmed the Vietnamese.) Nevertheless, the cautious linkages, posturing, and fending off which characterized ASEAN–Vietnamese relations after 1975 might well have led to a more comfortable accommodation between them had not Vietnam invaded Cambodia in December 1978 and in so doing violated the one rule about which there could be no compromise.

ASEAN's Maturity

It is understandable that the Vietnamese assumed the world would forget about their occupation of Cambodia in a few weeks.* In this they completely underestimated ASEAN. But so had nearly everyone else. As analysts and even ASEAN members and promoters often pointed out, ASEAN was not a strong organization; its emphasis on economic cooperation (and lack of achievement therein) and its public face as Southeast Asia's non-communist bloc tended to obscure the powerful ideas and interests which were coalescing within it. Fundamentally these were national and only secondarily economic and ideological. The fight within Cambodia was a communist intramural contest, and the invasion's impact upon economic circumstances within ASEAN was virtually nil; nevertheless, the change of government in Cambodia aroused ASEAN. It placed one ASEAN state, Thailand, in immediate jeopardy. In addition, the change resulted from a predatory act by one member of the neighborhood against another. However important reconciliation with Vietnam might be, ASEAN's leaders agreed it could not occur at the expense of Thailand or the neighborhood code. Nor, as it turned out, would it be permitted to occur at the expense of ASEAN itself.

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* See Kishore Mahbubani, pp. 409–410.

Beginning in 1979, ASEAN's leaders collectively denied recognition to the new Vietnam-backed government of Heng Samrin and articulated a common stand against Vietnam's military occupation of Cambodia. In the years that followed, they put forward a policy describing a resolution of the problem acceptable to them (at its heart, the withdrawal of Vietnam's occupation forces and self-determination within Cambodia with the goal of establishing it as an independent, non-aligned state); they persuaded the international community to deny the new regime a seat in the United Nations General Assembly; they promoted an international conference to dramatize the issue; they created and supported the anti-Vietnamese Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea led by Norodom Sihanouk, Son Sann, and Khieu Samphan (of the Khmer Rouge) to represent Cambodia diplomatically and to coordinate the armed resistance; and they have engaged in numerous attempts involving the principals as well as big power patrons to facilitate a solution to the problem compatible with Thailand's security, Cambodia's sovereignty, and Vietnam's legitimate interests. In short, confronting Vietnam over the issue of Cambodia forced ASEAN into the sort of effective policy collaboration envisioned at the Bali Summit, and it has given ASEAN a high and positive international profile.

On the other hand, for all its efforts to date, ASEAN has not successfully prevailed upon Vietnam to forfeit its domineering position in Cambodia, nor has it altered the state of affairs there in any other substantial way. Ironically, what has most fostered ASEAN's maturity is the intractable nature of the Cambodian crisis, with the intractable Vietnamese at the heart of it.

Thai–Vietnamese Rivalry

Although the history of all Southeast Asia is one of diversity and conflict, circumstances of geography, culture, and colonization have conspired to make Vietnam the region's most alien culture and polity. At some proto-historical time, it is true, the inhabitants of what is now northern Vietnam participated in a culture that flourished widely in mainland Southeast Asia and deep into the islands. But during the many centuries in which the societies that eventually became those of

Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Burma, and Java formed themselves around compatible elements of the high civilizations of classical India, Vietnamese society absorbed its civilization from China. Until 939 A.D. much of north and central Vietnam was incorporated as a frontier province within the Chinese empire, and the Vietnamese elite which prevailed thereafter, though passionately independent, still found in China the most attractive inspirations for the structure of their state and for the content of its high culture. In Vietnam, an emperor in the Chinese style governed through a bureaucracy of mandarin scholars steeped in the Chinese Confucian precepts; in the other societies god-kings great and small held sway, identifying themselves with one branch or another of India's Hindu-Buddhist tradition and presiding over a loose hierarchy of officials whose level of deference to the king was often a matter of kinship and a function of distance more than doctrine. Buddhism eventually prevailed in all mainland Southeast Asia. The Burmese, Thais, Laotians, and Cambodians adapted theirs, Theravada-style, from India via Ceylon; the Vietnamese, Mahayanans, learned theirs from China. Islam, which eventually superseded the Hindu-Buddhist tradition in the islands, found but a few converts on the mainland, among them remnants of the vanquished Chams in Vietnam; but the Vietnamese themselves were impervious. Vietnam was different to begin with.

In modern times, as new groups of Westernized elites formed in the region, Vietnamese elites learned their "Westernness" from France. This created something of an artificial kinship between them and their fellows, also French subjects, in Laos and Cambodia, but it further set them apart from the others in Southeast Asia who, in the twentieth century, were learning English and Dutch. In recent decades the ascendancy in Vietnam of a powerfully nationalistic Marxist movement, and finally a communist state, has accentuated in modern ideological terms its traditional separatism from the rest of Southeast Asia. Vietnam's otherness is nothing new. Irrespective of other transregional variables in the present impasse over Cambodia, from a historical perspective alone it is hardly surprising that it is Vietnam that is having the hardest time fitting into the neighborhood.

Of all ASEAN societies only Thailand has had a more or less continuous relationship with Vietnam throughout recent centuries, and this has been as a rival. As states of considerable power in their respective heartlands, Thailand and Vietnam have long competed over the weaker polities that lay between them, the Kingdom of Cambodia and the princely states of Laos. Culturally, these Mekong societies are akin to the Thais; and over the centuries the Thais have come to look upon access to their resources with a certain sense of entitlement. For this reason, and for security's sake, Thai rulers traditionally employed a variety of devices to keep the royal houses of the Laotian lowlands and Cambodia within their orbit. These devices were usually friendly but did not exclude war and hostage taking. Cultural affinities and the Thai practice of exerting Thailand's regional seniority indirectly—by governing annexed provinces through Cambodian governors, for example—resulted in a big brother-little brother relationship of "remarkable harmony," says historian Milton Osborne (p. 251). Such harmony did not characterize similarly motivated initiatives of the Vietnamese, whose attempts to bring the Mekong polities safely into *their* orbit was more frankly imperialistic, involving military occupation, the imposition of Vietnamese-style administration, and, as occurred in a Vietnamese sweep into Cambodia in the 1830s, overt attempts to Vietnamize the society by requiring the use of Vietnamese-style dress, changing place names, and suppressing the Theravada monkhood. In that instance, Thai forces aided Cambodians in ousting the Vietnamese. In fact, that was but one of several similar occasions from the eighteenth century onward in which the Thais "played the role of Cambodia's protector against the Vietnamese" (Osborne, pp. 251 and 253). In the reign of Rama III alone (1824–1851) the Thais fought the Vietnamese four times over Cambodia.

France's annexation of Indochina in the late nineteenth century froze the Thai–Vietnamese tug-of-war over Cambodia in Vietnam's favor; because of the imperially imposed structural and cultural affiliations of the two within French Indochina, Cambodia evolved in synchronization with Vietnam, although neither was autonomous. For its part, independent Thailand prudently relinquished its Cambodian provinces to France at the turn of the century.

The Thai–Vietnamese struggle for control over the middle ground blossomed anew after World War II during the turbulent decolonization of Indochina. Thailand might have had many reasons for becoming a party to the American policy of supporting the regimes of Saigon, but the one which reflected Thailand's most enduring interests was that a divided and war- torn Vietnam was a weak Vietnam. During the same years, Thailand and Vietnam pursued their feud in

Laos and Cambodia through Cambodian regimes and movements partisan to their respective interests. After the triumph of communist governments in all of Indochina in 1975, the Thai continued to support anti-communist movements in both Laos and Cambodia, and for Thailand the rabidly anti-Vietnamese sentiments of the triumphant Khmer Rouge in Cambodia was one small bright spot amidst the general disaster. In late 1978, when the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia, they were simply attempting, as they had repeatedly attempted in the past, to re-establish their pre-eminence there. Thailand also responded in a time-tested way by befriending and supporting Cambodian factions dedicated to rooting out the Vietnamese. These factions are otherwise known as the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea. Much in the current crisis duplicates similar conflicts of the past. In this round, Thailand is being supported by the Peoples Republic of China and the United States, and also by its modern regional partners in ASEAN.

With the possible exception of the tiny Sultanate of Brunei, Thailand is the only ASEAN country with a centuries-old tradition of statecraft. Scholars of Thailand have pointed out that, although Thailand, like India, has often been predatory around the edges in the direction of Burma, Cambodia, and the Laotian and Malay states, the Thais have not tried to become an imperial power but only have wanted to protect and to enhance the strength, stability and wealth of the kingdom itself and its ruling classes. For the same reason Thais have found it useful to ally themselves to powerful outside benefactors and protectors. In earlier centuries their benefactor and protector was imperial China, with whom Thai kings corresponded in a deferential fashion as senders of tribute. In return they expected the Chinese emperor to use his influence—primarily among other tributary states in the region—to protect Thailand. In the nineteenth century Thai kings made a shrewd assessment of the Western states swarming into Southeast Asia and chose Britain. Trade concessions—including opening Thailand to British-borne opium from India—and ceding territories on the Malay peninsula to Britain now placed Thailand safely within the informal sphere of Britain's world power and helped assure Thailand's survival as Southeast Asia's only noncolonized society.

In 1941, Thailand adroitly bent to the times by allying with Japan. In that way it avoided conquest during World War II and got back provinces in Cambodia that it had lost to the French at the turn of the century. At the war's end Thai leaders quickly made the amends necessary to place Thailand securely within the ascendent world system of the United States. Thailand signed the Manila Pact and joined the Philippines as one of the two Southeast Asian members of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, or SEATO. By making America's Cold War crusade its own, Thai military leaders provided for Thailand's security and gained access to an abundance of new resources for internal economic development.* In return, Thailand soon bristled with American military facilities and became the major base for logistics and intelligence for America's war efforts in Vietnam and Laos and eventually in Cambodia. Although Thailand later disengaged itself from some aspects of this arrangement, notably by obliging the United States to remove its bases, the Manila Pact obligations are still fundamentally in place. (These were tailored explicitly to Thai–U.S. security relations in the Rusk–Thanat Communique of 1962, which has been routinely renewed thereafter.)** Even so, in light of America's post-Vietnam withdrawal from a hands-on role in the region and the new threat in Cambodia, Thailand has repositioned itself once again, augmenting its support of Pax Americana by a modern marriage of convenience with the Chinese and active membership in ASEAN.

Both China and ASEAN have rallied to Thailand's side in the fight for Cambodia. From the vantage point of China's quarrels with the Soviet Union and the fears for its security this arouses, as well as the abiding tension between it and its erstwhile revolutionary protege, Vietnam, China's stake in the outcome in Cambodia is quite clear. But what of ASEAN?

ASEAN Perspectives

ASEAN's policy toward Cambodia and Vietnam was dictated from the start by the needs of Thailand; in *this* crisis Thailand was the "front line" state. Also, Thailand's hard-line position against Vietnam comports with ASEAN doctrine condemning predators in the neighborhood. Standing firmly by Thailand has been prompted, therefore, by the strong sense of solidarity among ASEAN members who fear that the *next* crisis might be theirs. On the other hand, the crisis in Cambodia has thrown into sharper relief the different security requirements of ASEAN countries: the size, demography, culture, location, and history of each dictate conflicting perceptions. The crisis has also thrown into sharper relief the tension within ASEAN between the goal of regional autonomy and the necessity for external protectors.

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* This follows M. R. Sukumbhand Paribatra, "Thailand's National Security Issues and Policies," a paper delivered at the First Pacific Workshop on Regional Affairs, Manila, September 1985.

** See Randolf, p. 28.

Singapore

In pressing for an uncompromising policy toward Vietnam, Thailand has found its most vociferous ASEAN ally in the Republic of Singapore. Singapore's diplomats, for example, have played a conspicuous role in orchestrating international disapproval of Vietnam, especially in the United Nations. As a very small state without significant natural resources and dependent on trade for its survival, Singapore is potentially one of Southeast Asia's most vulnerable states. Although officially "multi-racial," Singapore is undeniably an overseas Chinese society, and a conspicuously prosperous one; it finds itself nestled intimately between Southeast Asia's two large Islamic states, Malaysia and Indonesia. In both of these, anti-Chinese feelings run deep and wide among the indigenous majorities. These facts cause apprehensions about the security of Singapore. Its Premier, Lee Kuan Yew, warns that Singapore can take nothing for granted. He and his colleagues have forged within Singapore a dynamic modern economy and a militantly nationalistic spirit, and, insofar as the budget has allowed, have provided the city-state with a modern defense. In a world of potential predators, one of Singapore's goals is to be tough, prickly, and indigestible.

Another goal, however, is to arrange Singapore's relations with the outside world so that its indigestibility need never be put to the test. In this respect, the advantages to Singapore of being a good team player within ASEAN are overwhelming. The ASEAN code is based upon the sanctity of national sovereignty; what is more, ASEAN also provides an institutionalized means for Singapore to build close relationships with its neighbors. The more thoroughly integrated Singapore is within the web of ASEAN interests, the safer it is as well. Without compromising its attitude of proud independence, Singapore has chosen to identify its interests with ASEAN, and in some ways has worked overtime to demonstrate its fervor. It was partly in this spirit that Singapore rallied to Thailand's side in the Cambodian crisis. But it did so as well because Lee Kuan Yew senses that various protagonists in the Cambodian drama pose a danger for Singapore as well as for Thailand: Vietnam *is* the villain. And the danger Vietnam poses is immeasurably greater now because of the Soviet Union.

Since its independence in 1965 Singapore has followed an official policy of nonalignment. While world powers will inevitably and unavoidably be involved in Southeast Asia, small states are safest, according to Lee, when they are not implicated directly in the grand schemes of one power against another. Practically speaking, however, certain arrangements have been necessary for Singapore, and it was best and also convenient that these be made with compatible countries. Free-trading Singapore obviously turned to the West; until the early 1970s Singapore rested safely under Britain's formal protection and was thereafter party to the Five Power Defense Arrangement. Also for practical as well as ideological reasons, Singapore supported American policy in Vietnam and inveighed against the communist menace. Subversion by communist conspirators promoted from the outside, Lee Kuan Yew explained, was *the* most serious threat to his young and vulnerable country. Insofar as the United States acted to check the subversive initiatives of communist big powers it was a welcome presence in the neighborhood.

The ascendancy of the communists in Indochina at a time when America's commitment to a strong posture in Southeast Asia appeared to be waning was an alarming turn of events for Singapore. As China's attitude toward ASEAN turned from hostile to supportive in the early 1970s, and as Vietnam moved to institutionalize its close relationship with the Soviet Union, Singapore came to view the Vietnamese–Soviet partnership as the greatest danger to the security of the region, and hence to itself. This perspective wedded perfectly with that of the Thais and has accounted for Singapore's joining Thailand in an uncompromising stance against Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia. Singapore's posture may also involve an element of calculation. Lee Kuan Yew realizes that harping on the Soviet–Vietnam menace helps keep the United States interested and engaged, and a strong affiliation with Thailand gives Singapore useful leverage within ASEAN vis-a-vis its closer Islamic neighbors. Not incidentally, the views of the Islamic ASEAN countries about the crisis in Cambodia and its implications for the long-term security of Southeast Asia are somewhat different.

Indonesia

Year after year Malaysia and Indonesia have kept faith with the Thais over Cambodia. At the same time they have been conspicuously less hostile toward Vietnam than Thailand and Singapore and have been aggressive within ASEAN in their attempts to break the impasse with Vietnam and to hasten an end to the crisis. Both have offered new formulas for negotiations, and since 1983, as the formal interlocutor between ASEAN and Vietnam, Indonesia has worked tirelessly to bring Vietnam into a productive dialogue with other ASEAN nations. The urgency with which Indonesia and Malaysia seek a resolution to the crisis in Cambodia reflects contrary notions about just who the enemy really is.

Philosophically, Indonesia is ASEAN's strongest proponent of regional autonomy and eventual neutrality. This may have something to do with the fact that it is also Southeast Asia's largest country—by population three times larger than either Thailand or the Philippines or Vietnam, and ten times larger than Malaysia. It also reflects the traumatic circumstances of Indonesia's unfriendly disengagement from its colonial mentor, Holland. Indonesia's founders sought an independent course in international affairs and moved actively to avoid being made a proxy in the great global tussle of the Cold War. The destruction of the Vietnam War appalled them and confirmed their view that it is best to keep great powers at bay. Sukarno and Suharto shared this view, and Suharto has successfully projected it upon ASEAN. But, like Lee Kuan Yew and the other leaders of ASEAN countries, Suharto opted enthusiastically for the West when it inevitably came to differentiating among the big powers. Indonesia's New Order leaders are viscerally anti-communist and agree with Lee Kuan Yew that externally sponsored subversion represents a major potential threat to their state. But to Indonesia it is not the distant and clumsy Soviet Union and its Southeast Asian dependency Vietnam that threaten them most in the long run, it is China.

Indonesia's fear of China has its roots in the centuries- long interaction of indigenous Indonesians and the emigrés from China who established businesses and families in their midst. It is not clear at what point the stereotyping by ethnic Indonesians of the Chinese as "alien" blended with a perception of China itself as a powerful state looming threateningly to the north. Local lore had perhaps made a Mongol assault upon Java some 700 years ago popularly known. In any case, by the second half of the nineteenth century, when a new wave of Chinese immigrants added to the old, a fear of the "Yellow Peril" had already developed in Java. Dutch colonial reformers who campaigned against Chinese moneylenders and opium merchants may have fanned the flames. By the early twentieth century, as a resurgent China was sending consuls to look after Chinese communities abroad, Indonesian Moslem merchants began organizing themselves against the local Chinese who dominated much of the commercial life of the colony. From the beginning, modern Indonesian nationalism bore within it anti-Chinese sentiments. Popularly speaking, the Chinese were seen to side with the Dutch against indigenous Indonesians, even during the revolution. Indonesia's Chinese population was incidental to the Indonesian Communist Party, an overwhelmingly indigenous Indonesian movement. But China's support for the party and its alleged role in provoking what the current government insists was a Communist Party takeover attempt in 1965 fixed China as Indonesia's Enemy Number One. Indonesia has yet to re-establish diplomatic relations with China (they were "frozen" in 1967) and is still sufficiently obsessed with the fear of Chinese-sponsored subversion that Jakarta's censors black out any Chinese characters which may happen to appear in imported publications.

Indonesia's suspicions of China are only incidentally related to communism and reflect a vaguer fear that one day a mighty China, helped along by its loyal sons abroad, will engulf the smaller societies to its south, not necessarily by conquest, but by undermining them economically and ideologically. The prospect of a resurgent, confident, prosperous, and expansive China gives Indonesia a powerful reason to hasten the day when Vietnam, which also loathes and fears China, can become an ASEAN partner. What is particularly alarming to Indonesia about the eight-year stand-off with Vietnam is that it has continued to alienate an important potential partner that is inescapably part of the neighborhood, just as it has drawn into ASEAN's midst as an ally Southeast Asia's most dangerous friend, China.

Indonesia is well disposed toward Vietnam for other reasons besides viewing it as an important potential partner in ASEAN. It deeply respects Vietnam for achieving its independence against powerful adversaries. Also, in some circles Indonesians argue that, in occupying Cambodia, Vietnam acted with understandable and legitimate concerns for its security.* As for the Soviets, the argument goes, only desperate circumstances have forced the Vietnamese into a reluctant dependency. These points of view are represented powerfully among the Indonesian leadership, but they have not deflected Suharto from his staunch support for ASEAN solidarity. These views have spurred him, however, to encourage his diplomats, most prominently his current Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, and other agents who work through nondiplomatic channels, to explore all conceivable avenues toward reconciliation.**

Malaysia

In many ways, Malaysia and Indonesia are of like mind. Malaysia is a small country whose public face is self-consciously Malay and Moslem but whose Chinese population constitutes more than a third of the total. As a consequence, race is the central question of Malaysian politics. Like their compatriots in Indonesia, the Malaysian Chinese have played a role of disproportionate prominence in the society's economic life and modern urban prosperity. Today, in a finely-tuned political arrangement, their leaders are subordinated within a Malay- dominated national coalition. and Malaysia's citizens of Chinese descent are feeling the effects of a program of affirmative action designed to redress the economic balance in the direction of the Malays. It goes without saying that many Malays express doubts about the ultimate loyalty of their Chinese countrymen. Malaysia's current premier, Mahathir bin Mohammed, some years ago in his book *The Malay Dilemma* articulated publicly an analogous fear: that in open competition, Malays would be no match for the Chinese. Malaysia's leaders do not now project these anxieties onto the People's Republic of China, with whom Malaysia has had friendly relations since 1974. Nor does there seem to be in Malaysia the popular notion of a China expanding relentlessly southward. Nevertheless, at another level, the prospect of an economically prosperous and politically assertive China might have a more profound influence domestically in Malaysia than in Indonesia. For Malaysia too, then, China is a problematic friend. When Premier Mahathir enjoins his people to "Look East," he points emphatically toward Japan.

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* For a recent example, see Siagian, pp. 92–93.

** For a more extensive discussion of Indonesia and Vietnam, see Rush, "Making the Neighborhood Safe."

In the Malaysian view, the Vietnamese could be a constructive force in the region, but not at the expense of Thailand, which is not only the front-line state but also a country with whom Malaysia shares a short but sensitive land border. What happens in Thailand is directly important to Malaysia's national security. Within ASEAN, therefore, Malaysia has supported the Thai diplomatic position, encouraged the creation and support of the anti-Vietnamese Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea led by Sihanouk—indeed, it was formally inaugurated in Kuala Lumpur in 1982—and provided to the coalition some token military support of its own. While keeping the heat on, however, it has also worked diplomatically to bring Vietnam into negotiations. In 1985, Mahathir proposed that a representation from the Heng Samrin group join the Vietnamese delegation for the first time in "proximity talks" with the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea.

The Soviet Union, although troubling to the region in the short run, does not loom large in Malaysian fears. After Thailand's security, the primary issue for Malaysia is Vietnam's violation of the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of Cambodia. Almost equally important is ASEAN itself. For Malaysia, especially under Mahathir, ASEAN's style of assertive regionalism comports well with Malaysia's efforts to break loose from Western apron strings, and with other national goals, especially those of economic growth. Among ASEAN leaders, Malaysians have been aggressive in describing protectionism and other restrictive economic policies practiced by ASEAN's friends in the West as a direct threat to Malaysia and to ASEAN. Mahathir himself warned in the September 4, 1986, issue of the *New Straits Times* that developing countries which are "overwhelmed by unbearable external debts, straitjacketed by protectionism and beggared by volatile interest and exchange rates" cannot become resilient. In Malaysia today economic problems are viewed as second only to domestic polarization as a threat to the state's *security*. Standing with ASEAN in negotiating with powerful trading partners and creditors—that is, with ASEAN's official dialogue partners (the United States, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, the European Economic Community, Canada, and the U.N. Development Program)—Malaysia's voice is louder and more powerful than if it were negotiating alone. And this is of course true for the others as well.

The Philippines

Most removed from ASEAN's center of gravity and from the turbulence of the mainland is the Philippines. From the beginning the Philippines has been an officially earnest but somewhat distant partner to the association. More than any other member, its external links to the United States outweigh by far any felt security deriving from its affiliation with ASEAN. This was reinforced in the 1970s. As other ASEAN states quaked at the American pull-back and rushed to reinforce their solidarity, Filipinos could relax in the knowledge that the United States had pulled back . . . to the Philippines. There seemed to be no possibility that the United States would remove its substantial military presence there, at least not on its own initiative. Of course, overbearing American influence in the Philippines was an ongoing political sore point, and from the outset membership in ASEAN provided a largely abstract Southeast Asian counterpoint to the close identity of the Philippines with the United States. As the sole architect of Philippine foreign policy from 1965, and one of the founding promoters of ASEAN, Ferdinand Marcos could have it both ways and did. This arrangement was quite agreeable to the rest of ASEAN's leaders, too, who in bravely pronouncing ZOPFAN as their goal, counted privately upon a lingering, and some hoped prolonged, Pax Americana to pave the way.

When Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia provided ASEAN its first real test, the Philippines closed ranks with the others and since then has consistently supported ASEAN's position. On the other hand, the Philippines has not especially engaged itself in the process of defining that position or of bridging the impasse. The mushrooming domestic crisis of the Philippines during the final bitter years of Ferdinand Marcos's government accounts for this for the most part, but it is also true that the American security blanket still renders most outside problems somewhat abstract for Filipinos, even if they are happening in the neighborhood. At another level, however, Filipino membership in ASEAN has been considerably more than lip service. Filipino diplomats and officials have participated actively in the association's organizational life, and, like their counterparts in other ASEAN states, have begun forming a substantial trans-national web of colleagues and friends. And, as has occurred everywhere in ASEAN in the past several years, Filipino professionals, businessmen and others have joined in the proliferation of clubs and associations that use ASEAN in their names. The ASEAN idea, the ASEAN identity, has taken hold in the Philippines just as it has elsewhere.*

Among the difficult tasks the new Philippine government has dedicated itself to is achieving a higher level of national autonomy with respect to the United States. Whether or not this will involve removing American military bases remains to be seen, but among those who participated actively in bringing Corazon Aquino to power were individuals who advocate just that; a third of the commissioners mandated by Mrs. Aquino to write the new constitution also voted in favor of a resolution prohibiting foreign military bases after the current agreement expires in 1991. No matter how this issue is resolved, however, ASEAN now provides the Philippines with an alternative way of thinking of its role in the world community. For a long time, Filipinos have focused almost exclusively upon the United States, but now, as part of ASEAN, they can see themselves as fully autonomous Southeast Asians. It is an attractive idea, and for those Filipinos who aspire to a dramatic departure from past Philippine–American togetherness, it is an idea with important possibilities. For this reason, and because the new Philippine government sees economic advantages to come from its membership, ASEAN matters deeply to the Philippines.

Standing Together

Indeed, this seems now to be true everywhere. In the past decade, because of its highly visible solidarity against Vietnam and partly because of its attempts to achieve and sustain the consensus which makes solidarity possible, ASEAN has matured into a central institution of the region. Confronting Vietnam has not only helped forge ASEAN into a diplomatic bloc, it has also forced ASEAN into devising more highly developed machinery for country-to-country cooperation—in dealing with the outflow of refugees, for example. At the same time, other aspects of ASEAN have also matured. Very important among them are its region- focused meetings and negotiations with its dialogue partners. These are not designed to replace bilateral relations. They do represent the attempt of ASEAN nations, however, to stand together when facing their friends as well as their enemies, especially when tackling issues about which they and their Western friends are not of one mind. This is important as ASEAN leaders increasingly emphasize economic diplomacy. Collaborative negotiation is not simply a strategy of gaining clout by ganging up; it is also a way to achieve the ASEAN vision of regional autonomy: dealing with dialogue partners collectively is a way, both ritually and practically, of keeping outside powers at bay. This has also strengthened ASEAN.

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* See Rush, "ASEAN and Southeast Asia."

ASEAN's leaders are aware that club membership brings with it numerous advantages. ASEAN members are inclined to rally to each other's cause when challenged and to refrain from criticizing each other publicly. Consider ASEAN's support for Indonesia's position on East Timor, and the virtual absence of public criticism or alarm over the domestic stewardship of Ferdinand Marcos. However, when the Marcos house finally crumbled, the well established collaborative links among ASEAN partners facilitated swift and frank consultations and a collaborative response; not a single note of congratulation reached Ferdinand Marcos from his ASEAN partners following his proclaimed electoral victory in 1986, and this was no coincidence. Hopes for economic integration through ASEAN have been largely unrequited so far; ASEAN's economies are unfortunately competitive rather than complementary. But this has not thwarted efforts within the association to find a formula whereby the regional economies can become positively interactive; indeed, efforts in this direction are increasing as all ASEAN countries think of foreign relations more and more in economic terms.

ASEAN cannot eliminate the frictions that exist among member states. To this day, for example, the issue of Sabah has not yet been finally resolved. But the ASEAN "state of mind," to use the phrase of Malaysia's former minister of foreign affairs, Ghazalie Shafie, has begun to overwhelm these frictions, pushing their implications for regional life to a lower level of conflict. ASEAN has become, in short, a comprehensively valuable institution.*

Indeed, for most of its members, ASEAN is considerably more important than Cambodia. For this reason, despite differences among the members as to how the crisis should be approached, they have agreed to follow the group consensus formed around the needs and perceptions of front-line Thailand, for whom the future of Cambodia may well be more important than ASEAN. For those ASEAN members like Indonesia that fear the growing influence of China in their midst, backing the Thais keeps Thailand within the group and helps to provide a regional counterweight to the Chinese. Breaking with the Thais over Cambodia, conversely, might weaken ASEAN irreparably and would not in any case inhibit Chinese influence in Thailand; quite to the contrary, Thailand would then have to draw ever more comprehensively upon China to pursue its security objectives in Cambodia. Working from a regional consensus articulated through ASEAN also means that Thailand's ASEAN partners continue to have a voice; this may not deflect the Thais from their basic objectives but might encourage them to consider a wider range of possibilities than they might otherwise.* Influencing the outcome requires influencing the Thais; and this can best be done from within, as staunch friends.

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* On the "ASEAN state of mind" see Ahmad, pp. 192–212.

ASEAN is not likely to fragment over Cambodia.

Cambodia and the Future of the Neighborhood

Vietnam's behavior has done everything to encourage the solidarity of ASEAN. In response to attempts by ASEAN to promote a negotiated resolution to the crisis, Vietnam has repeatedly insisted upon its prerogative of occupation, causing even those ASEAN members who are somewhat sympathetic to Vietnam to acknowledge that it does not seem to be very cooperative. As official interlocutor on behalf of ASEAN with Vietnam, Indonesia's Mochtar Kusumaatmadja has often emphasized Hanoi's flexible side, cheerfully keeping alive the hope for a breakthrough, and working doggedly for it in consultations with Vietnam's Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach. His efforts have not been completely fruitless, for he has been able to keep the "talk channel" open. But Mochtar has yet to pry a concession of consequence from Hanoi. Thus, in a sequence of proposals and responses between ASEAN and Vietnam over several years, only negligible progress has been made; instead, periods of apparent thaw seem inevitably to lead to new rounds of stubbornness.

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* Internally not all Thais are of one mind about the "hard line." See Paribatra, pp. 30–33.

What makes this all the more frustrating is that Hanoi is one of the few variables in the Cambodian crisis which ASEAN leaders can hope to influence. They acknowledge with chagrin that the variables attaching to great power rivalries, especially the rivalry between the Chinese and the Soviets, are ultimately decisive but wholly beyond their reach. Given Vietnam's clear intention of making its preeminence in Cambodia permanent, no solution satisfactory to ASEAN—minimally a neutral Cambodia—seems possible until China and the Soviet Union resolve their animosity and then manage to persuade their Indochinese clients to reach a settlement—a highly tentative undertaking. What kind of assurances would it take, for example, and from whom, to make Vietnam retreat from taking a direct hand in the affairs of Cambodia?

The United States—"Following" ASEAN

On the other hand, ASEAN does influence American policy toward Cambodia; indeed the United States, while not adhering to all of ASEAN's proposals, officially "follows" ASEAN on the issue. It has consistently supported ASEAN diplomatically, for example, and materially supports the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea directly through humanitarian aid and indirectly with funds coursed through Thailand and other ASEAN states. Bilaterally it continues to provide large doses of military assistance to Thailand. Supporting its Western-leaning, free enterprise Southeast Asian friends in ASEAN against Soviet- backed Vietnamese aggression accords well with official American attitudes and with the security posture of the United States, as does the *de facto* partnership with the People's Republic of China. It is well understood among ASEAN leaders that the United States will continue to follow ASEAN only insofar as these convergences continue to pertain, and that, therefore, "following" might more bluntly be construed as "using." But this is how it is with powerful friends.

That the United States has elected to follow ASEAN and not to move unilaterally into Cambodia has been a boon to the association's attempt to be an effective diplomatic bloc. This boon outweighs

ASEAN's disappointments with American policy. For example, the United States recently balked at endorsing the coalition government's ASEAN-backed eight-point proposal which called for Khmer Rouge participation in a transitional Cambodian regime. And it also outweighs the disappointments of individual ASEAN members with divergent hopes from American action—the Thais, lobbying for stronger American support for the coalition government and its armed forces, or the Indonesians, attempting to coax the United States into a more affirmative relationship with Vietnam. ASEAN has benefited not only from the support but also from the predictability of American behavior, for, even though ASEAN leaders would like the United States to do *more* (of this or that), they do not wish the delicate process of achieving a long-term solution to be disrupted by a clumsy American maneuver. Although it is often argued that the United States should be less passive in its Indochina policy, the ASEAN countries would just as soon it did not make a unilateral departure from the ASEAN track.

The United States–ASEAN alignment on Cambodia reflects what is perceived both in Washington and in the ASEAN capitals to be a comprehensive convergence of interests, and this convergence is reinforced by close security ties all around, including military aid, friendly weapons sales, joint military exercises and American military schooling for ASEAN officers. All of this is viewed within ASEAN, albeit with country-to-country variations, as desirable if not essential, ZOPFAN notwithstanding. Symbolically, it is of the greatest importance that the United States follow ASEAN on Cambodia and not the other way around. But like ASEAN, the United States is only an indirect player in the Cambodian conflict. It can influence the outcome, but it cannot determine it.

Moving in a Positive Direction

Is there any way to bring about a desirable outcome? Certainly none which ASEAN can supply on its own. This is why ASEAN strategy, especially Indonesia's initiatives, is calculated to nudge the *smaller* variables in a positive direction—keeping the ASEAN–Vietnam dialogue open, easing relations between the United States and Hanoi (Mochtar prevailed upon the Vietnamese to respond earnestly to inquiries about U.S. soldiers missing in action, for example), promoting Sihanouk as a figure of compromise for Cambodians and otherwise emphasizing and nurturing the non-Khmer Rouge factions of the anti-Vietnamese coalition, differentiating between "the Khmer Rouge" and "the Pol Pot clique" (a distinction that all parties except China find useful), and treating Heng Samrin's government as an interested party independent of Vietnam's interest in *it,* and so on—all the while keeping the heat on against Vietnam's occupation forces through the coalition's guerrillas and against Hanoi diplomatically. Indonesia was quick, for example, to take up the new possibilities presented by the declared interest of the Soviet Union under Mikhail Gorbachev in improving its relations with China and ASEAN. The hope was that the Soviet Union might prevail upon Hanoi to be less rigid about its expectations for Cambodia. Perhaps Nguyen Co Thach's recent elevation into the higher circles of the Vietnamese Communist Party will also begin to bear fruit for ASEAN. Mochtar Kusumaatmadja and his ASEAN colleagues are not so naive as to believe that any one of these initiatives will break the deadlock. But they pursue each possibility earnestly so that if and when external factors permit it, all the small elements prepared patiently by ASEAN will tumble into place, hastening a resolution and affecting the nature of it. This is their best hope, and ASEAN's leaders and diplomats persevere in it.

Some are even optimists. "Time is on our side," Mochtar told me in September 1986. He cited the extremely high cost to Vietnam of a permanent occupation of Cambodia, not the least unendurable aspect of which is a permanent dependence upon the Soviet Union. "The Vietnamese," he said, "want to be out of Russia's grip as much as we want them to be." The failure of Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia is as inevitable as the failure of its rigidly planned economy, he believes, and when the steely, dogmatic old guard finally passes in Vietnam, a new generation of pragmatists will take things in hand and seek a pragmatic solution to Cambodia. "Meanwhile, we wait." Other ASEAN diplomats have put forward a similar analysis, contending that, despite the conventional wisdom which sees Vietnam hanging on until its opponents give up in despair and boredom, in fact the Vietnamese "have no hope of wearing out China." "Only when the Vietnamese finally realize that they are on a losing track," writes Singapore's Kishore Mahbubani, " . . . will a settlement come about in Cambodia. Until then, Asians—as they have long realized—can only be patient" (p. 149).

What Is and What Might Be

In the meantime, what is the unresolved dilemma of Cambodia doing to the neighborhood? It continues to generate destructive turbulence and misery both in Cambodia itself and in Thailand's border areas, affecting hundreds of thousands of people; and it requires the allocation of extraordinary resources which could be invested better elsewhere. (This is true of both sides, of course.) From the ASEAN perspective, the Cambodian crisis has drawn big powers back into the region as key players and has once again involved local states in global quarrels, which is always dangerous. That one of these newly re-involved big powers is China is especially alarming to two ASEAN states, Malaysia and Indonesia, and for other reasons is no less problematic for Singapore. On the other hand, the consensus remains strong within ASEAN that the status quo is a tolerable alternative to capitulating to Vietnam. In fact, the status quo is not without its advantages. Bogged down in Cambodia, the Vietnamese are forced to divert huge sums to pay for the occupation. This keeps Vietnam weak, but it also enhances Thailand's security, although clumsily, and postpones the day when a vigorous Vietnam might wish to throw its weight around the neighborhood. Thailand and Singapore are comforted by the thought of a bogged-down Vietnam, but Indonesia would welcome Vietnam's emergence as an independently resilient neighbor. The current stalemate also buys time for Sihanouk and other leaders of the non-communist element of the anti-Vietnamese coalition to expand their influence at the expense of the numerically dominant and diplomatically inconvenient Khmer Rouge. Finally, the longer the stalemate, the tenser relations will become between the Cambodians and the Vietnamese and between the Vietnamese and the Soviets. The maturation of these tensions just might coerce the Vietnamese into a more flexible attitude after all.

If a solution to the Cambodian crisis can be found which provides, to their respective satisfaction, for the security of both Thailand *and* Vietnam, it is likely that other aspects of the communist-noncommunist impasse in Southeast Asia will also be breached. Like the ASEAN states, Vietnam must find its way to national prosperity and resilience; and it has reasons born of its own historical experience to distance itself from external powers, friend or foe, wherever this is possible. Although committed to a socialist blueprint, Vietnam is first and foremost a nation state, and, like its neighbors, it is a youthful and vulnerable one. Ideology aside, Vietnam and its ASEAN neighbors have much in common. As they gradually rise to power, younger leaders, post-revolutionary technocrats, planners and managers, will see this and begin interacting more routinely with their counterparts in the rest of Southeast Asia. ASEAN's machinery could help to speed up this interaction.

ASEAN's concept of regional autonomy is attractive and meaningful to the Vietnamese, as is the long-term goal of ZOPFAN, which Mochtar Kusumaatmadja has recently defined as "capable of *rejecting* any entanglements or alliances with any foreign country or power bloc" (p. 143). This formulation implies autonomy at the same time as it recognizes the reality of ASEAN's current security arrangements and could apply to Vietnam and its security arrangements as well. No one within ASEAN imagines that the process of phasing out foreign bases and external alliances will be anything but slow—indeed ASEAN leaders outside the Philippines agree that American bases there are desirable now. But inasmuch as all policy reflects a dialogue between what is and what might be, ASEAN's adherence to ZOPFAN as the *ideal* state of affairs will help facilitate a meeting of minds with Vietnam. The incompatibilities of socialist and non-socialist systems may mitigate against Vietnam's actually joining the association in the future, but mutual adherence to ZOPFAN and to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (or another which enshrines the neighborhood code) would be the logical first steps in that direction. For the time being the Cambodian crisis stands in the way of this development, and it may continue to do so indefinitely; but one reason Indonesia has invested so much in keeping the "talk channel" open and in exploring each avenue for resolving the Cambodian impasse is the hope, reflecting Suharto's vision for ASEAN, that Vietnam, Cambodia, and also Laos will one day no longer simply be in the neighborhood, but will be *of* it as well.

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10.

U.S. Policy toward Vietnam Since the Fall of Saigon

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Analyses of U.S. policy toward Vietnam since the fall of Saigon have centered on the influence of three factors: residual bitterness, the "China card," and the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia. Important in varying degrees as these factors have been, however, they need to be considered in the broader context of major changes in the American perspective on East and Southeast Asia. These changes began in the late 1960s well before the communist victory in Indochina. One was a much diminished concern with Southeast Asia as the source of major strategic threats to U.S. interests. A second, coming a good deal later, was the substitution of ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) for Vietnam as the focus of American policy interest in the region.

It is this changed perspective that provides the rationale for the very limited role the United States has played in the Third Indochina War, a role that has constricted U.S. leverage but otherwise thus far has served American interests well. Of major consequence in laying the foundation for this altered perspective was the American rapprochement with the People's Republic of China, itself vastly facilitated by the Sino–Soviet split and Chinese concern with the progress of U.S.–Soviet detente. But also of considerable significance were evolutionary trends in non-communist Southeast Asia toward national integration and regional cooperation. Changed relations among the great powers undermined the argument that massive American involvement in Indochina was required to contain Sino–Soviet expansionism; regional developments cast increasing doubt on the validity of the domino theory.

U.S. Credibility

The Nixon Doctrine of July 1969 is remembered primarily for its confirmation of plans for complete U.S. troop withdrawal from Vietnam and the limits it placed on future U.S. military participation in the defense of Asian allies and friends. Less noted was its implicit abandonment of the domino theory. At Guam, in terms that have since become part of the litany of Republican and Democratic administrations alike, Nixon emphasized the strengths, not the weaknesses, of non-communist Asia. As his successors have done, he stressed record economic growth rates in Southeast Asia and the decline of the Marxist doctrinal appeal as communist countries fell behind economically. He also pointed to the limits "Red China's" internal problems were placing on its ability to export revolution.

Within two years, "Red Chinese" expansionism, like the domino theory before it, was being eliminated from the official American array of threat perceptions in Southeast Asia. Thus, in October 1970, even though the U.S. invasion of Cambodia had temporarily halted talks between China and the United States, Assistant Secretary of State Marshall Green, in testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Relations, declared that China was " . . . not today considered to pose a juggernaut type threat to its neighbors." Granting continued concerns among China's smaller neighbors, he said, "Nevertheless the nature of the threat on China's periphery is less direct than many supposed it earlier to be and the capacity of others to deal with the threat, especially among China's non-Communist neighbors, is generally greater than in the '50s" (Green, p. 615).

Given a radically altered threat perception and rapidly declining public support for further large investments merely to preserve South

Vietnam's independence, the maintenance of U.S. credibility became the Administration's major justification for continued American participation in the Indochina hostilities. Thus, in March 1975, pressed by congressional questioners to explain the need for maintaining the flow of arms and assistance to Indochina, Assistant Secretary of State Philip Habib responded, "We no longer see the security of the United States as directly, immediately at issue. Nevertheless, it remains true that failure to sustain our purposes in Indochina would have a corrosive effect on our ability to conduct effective diplomacy worldwide" (U.S. Congress, H.R., *The Vietnam–Cambodia Emergency*, p. 244).

In the war's aftermath, a new vision of power balance in East Asia favorable to U.S. interests and of a more "mature" relationship with an increasingly prosperous, stable, and cohesive ASEAN was enshrined in President Gerald Ford's Pacific Doctrine and other public statements. It was not, however, reflected in the formulation of any new and comprehensive policy toward Southeast Asia. Nor was the decline in attention to Indochina reflected in correspondingly increased attention to non-communist Southeast Asia. Such interest as Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger retained was not in Southeast Asia itself but in how American policy there would enhance or reduce what he saw as badly-damaged American credibility worldwide. The *Mayaguez* rescue effort was a case in point. No thought was given to the impact on relations with Bangkok of a military action mounted in disregard of Thai sovereignty; instead, the focus was on demonstrating that the United States could not be challenged with impunity and would not hesitate to use military power to defend its interests.

Similar considerations lay behind policies pursued with respect to SEATO (the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization) and the large American military presence in Thailand. With the war over and detente with China well under way, the United States now had no interest in perpetuating either of these arrangements. But it was the Administration's hope that the dissolution of SEATO and the withdrawal from Thailand could be accomplished in ways that would not suggest that the United States was being forced out of the region or that it was abandoning its responsibilities. The resumption of negotiations over the Philippine base-rights agreement also reflected, among other things, this preoccupation with credibility. Thus, responding to doubts concerning the defense relationship expressed by Philippine

President Ferdinand Marcos and others, Kissinger declared in June 1975, "We will permit no question to arise about the firmness of our treaty commitments. Allies who seek our support will find us constant. At the same time, if any partner seeks to modify these commitments, we will be prepared to accommodate that desire" (Fernandez, p. 286).

With damage limitation the principal preoccupation, no broad concept of the future American role in Southeast Asia emerged from higher levels beyond an intermittent interest in a more active relationship with Indonesia based on its potential as a "regional influential." Indeed inattention was at times so great that it hampered the conduct of day-to-day business. This was notably the case in the troop withdrawal negotiations with Thailand, where the inability of officials at the working level in Washington to get their superiors to make necessary decisions and provide negotiating instructions posed serious problems for American representatives in Bangkok.

Significant pressures from below for some new comprehensive approach to Southeast Asia were also lacking. Day-to-day operational tasks—receiving and resettling large numbers of refugees, disposing of military equipment en route to Indochina, negotiating with Thailand, trying to sustain a modicum of congressional support for continued assistance—were even more absorbing than usual. At the working level, moreover, there was real confidence that the ASEAN countries would recover fairly rapidly from the shock effects of the communist victory in Indochina and would benefit from reduced American paternalism, if this were not carried to the point of complete neglect. Whatever the limits of policy planning, the unavoidable business of government nevertheless required continued attention by those operationally responsible. Such daily pressures, of course, were not felt on the Hill or among the general public. There, the desire to forget Vietnam tended to extend to all of Southeast Asia. In Congress, attitudes toward Southeast Asia in general were expressed in the form of aid cuts. Particular—and negative—concerns were focused on human rights problems in the Philippines.

The Normalization Question

The desire to forget, of course, applied with particular force to the question of future relations with Vietnam. In business circles, prospects for offshore oil exploration and trade aroused some limited interest in normalizing relations with Hanoi. Otherwise, there was no significant constituency pressing for such action or even expressing interest in the possibility. Moreover, to the extent that residual bitterness was an important barrier to normalization, it was intensified by Hanoi's own policies: its insistence that the United States was obliged under the Paris Agreement of 1973 to supply substantial amounts of aid and its unwillingness to discuss procedures for providing an accounting of Americans listed as missing-in-action unless the United States first acknowledged its aid obligation. Bitterness was certainly a factor in Administration policy. The "peace with honor" that Nixon had announced on January 3, 1973, and for which Kissinger had been awarded the Nobel Prize had proved to be anything but. For this, in Administration eyes, the blame lay with Congress and with Hanoi. Thus, the terms in which Kissinger announced American intentions in June 1975 seemed hardly promising. "New regimes have come to power in Asia in the last few months," he said. "They have flouted international agreements and flagrantly violated international standards and that we cannot ignore. But we are prepared to look to the future. Our attitude toward them will be influenced by their conduct toward their neighbors and their attitude toward us" (Kissinger, p. 4). In September 1976, as the Ford Administration drew to a close, Assistant Secretary of State Arthur Hummel's congressional testimony indicated little change. Still emphasizing that the United States was looking to the future not the past, he added, "For us the most serious single obstacle in proceeding toward normalization is the refusal of Hanoi to give us a full accounting of those missing in action. Hanoi for its part continues to demand economic assistance under the Paris Agreement. We believe that the Paris Agreement was so massively violated by Hanoi that we have no obligation to provide assistance, and in any case Congress has prohibited such assistance by law" (U.S. Congress, H.R., *Hearings*, Sept. 28, 1976, p. 6).

Meanwhile, the embargo, which had been extended on May 16, 1975, to all of Vietnam and Cambodia from its wartime application to the communist-controlled area, remained in force, as did the freeze on South Vietnamese assets in the United States. In 1975 and again in November 1976 the United States vetoed Hanoi's application for membership in the United Nations, on the latter occasion with specific reference to the missing-in-action issue. Antagonism aroused by Hanoi's demands also dominated congressional action: the Foreign Assistance Appropriation Act of 1976 had barred the use of any of the funds provided for assistance to Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. At the same time, however, the missing-in-action issue was evoking congressional interest in contacts with Hanoi and in such inducements to better behavior as a temporary suspension of the embargo. In response, in March 1976, the Administration undertook an exchange with Hanoi that led to a meeting in Paris on November 12 between officers of the American and Vietnamese embassies there. The ice had at least been broken. President Jimmy Carter took office not only with a commitment of his own to normalize relations but also with an established basis for continued contact.

Its commitment to normalization with Vietnam aside, the Carter Administration entered office as unequipped with a comprehensive Southeast Asian policy as the Ford Administration had been on leaving it. Indeed, the dominant impression conveyed by the victorious Democrats—especially to an already apprehensive ASEAN—was of an Administration that would give high priority to relations with Vietnam and very little priority, or even attention, to non-communist Southeast Asia. This, at least, seemed to be the message that was being conveyed by prominent Democrats. In December, for example, Senator Mike Mansfield, in defining five U.S. objectives in East Asia, cited two for Southeast Asia: "adjusting to the realities of Indochina" and terminating the U.S. defense commitment to Thailand and U.S. aid as well (Mansfield, p. 86). Before the election, in a private communication to Carter, Cyrus Vance had put a similar emphasis on Vietnam, defining the course that should be adopted there in some detail as compared with a cursory mention of the rest of Southeast Asia (Vance, pp. 443, 444, 450).

Many who were influential in the Administration had been prominent opponents of the war. For example, on the occasion of Hanoi's admission to the United Nations, Ambassador to the United Nations Andrew Young, in what he described as a personal word, reminded the General Assembly that ten years earlier Martin Luther King, Jr., whose widow was now a member of the U.S. delegation, had demonstrated against the war in Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, while five years earlier he himself had sponsored legislation cutting off funds for waging the war (U.N. General Assembly, p. 14).

Even among those who did not identify themselves so ardently with the anti-war movement, normalization was seen as a psychologically helpful symbol of the end of a tragic era and as a way of encouraging Vietnam to concentrate on internal reconstruction and to dilute Soviet influence there. It appeared also that the missing-in-action issue might become less sensitive at home. The House Select Committee on Missing Persons in Southeast Asia concluded in its December 1976 report that "no Americans are still being held alive as prisoners in Indochina" and that "a total accounting by the Indochina governments is not possible and should not be expected" (Chanda, p. 146). There was also considerable optimism that Hanoi would respond to the Carter Administration in a more accommodating manner than it had to the Ford Administration.

With these anticipations, in mid-March 1977, as one of its earliest East Asian policy moves, the Administration dispatched a prestigious mission to Hanoi led by President Leonard Woodcock of the United Auto Workers union. The results of the Woodcock mission seemed rather promising. The Vietnamese turned over the remains of eleven Americans and agreed to set up special machinery for acting on missing-in-action information provided by the United States. The mission's report described the Vietnamese as showing interest in the establishment of a new and more friendly relationship. While they clearly expected a U.S. contribution to their economic reconstruction, they were flexible about its form and showed an understanding of American political constraints. In a subsequent press conference, Carter welcomed this flexibility. However, he was careful to emphasize that, even though an aid and trade relationship could flow from the normalization process, the United States owed Vietnam neither apologies nor debts (Carter, p. 360).

The atmosphere still seemed propitious just before the first meeting in Paris in May 1977 between American representatives led by Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke and a Vietnamese delegation led by Vice Foreign Minister Phan Hien. Already committed to supporting Vietnam's admission to the United Nations, Washington had also demonstrated its new attitude by relaxing travel restrictions and licensing private humanitarian organizations to provide some $5 million in aid to Vietnam. Hanoi, for its part, had signalled its interest in relations with the United States and the West in a number of ways.

Carter Administration hopes were soon dashed, however. Not only did Phan Hien quickly raise Vietnam's aid demand in the meeting with Holbrooke, he also reiterated it in a press conference immediately thereafter. Hanoi radio broadcasts claimed that the United States owed Vietnam $4.5 million in reparations. A congressional response followed immediately. In the House, an amendment to the State Department authorization bill, passed by a large majority after only ten minutes of debate, prohibited the use of any of the funds provided "for the purpose of negotiating reparations, aid or any other form of payment." A subsequent amendment, originating in the Senate, required American representatives to oppose assistance to Vietnam by international lending institutions (Zasloff and Brown, pp. 23–25).

Two subsequent U.S.–Vietnamese meetings in Paris in June and December 1977 produced no progress. In January 1978 a projected February session was cancelled when the Vietnamese ambassador to the United Nations was named as an unindicted conspirator in the David Truong/Ronald Humphrey espionage case and was expelled from the United States.

A New Relationship with ASEAN

By this time, however, normalization with Vietnam, although it remained an objective of the Administration, had ceased to be a central preoccupation and had become only one facet of a broader Southeast Asian strategy centering on a new, more active relationship with ASEAN. The uneasiness of the ASEAN countries with the Administration's initial policies had been very evident. They were concerned not only about its preoccupation with Vietnam but also about other policies that seemed to them to demonstrate indifference or worse to Asian interests. To their voices were added the more influential ones of equally concerned Japan and Australia. Writing to Secretary of State Vance, Australian Foreign Minister Andrew Peacock argued that the ASEAN countries should not be given the impression that the United States was rewarding their "moderation and a serious effort at self help" with neglect. Instead, he urged Vance to envisage using an unusual period of peace in Southeast Asia as an opportune time to strengthen "elements of stability and development." Due attention should be paid to the desirability of persuading the countries of Indochina to "put the past behind them," he said. But the balance should always favor ASEAN, which should be receiving much more American attention (Haupt, p. 8).

The United States had, in fact, been taking favorable notice of ASEAN for some time, but in quite a low-key manner that rarely went beyond citing it as one example of the new, favorable trends in East Asia. Thus, in congressional testimony in November 1975, Assistant Secretary Habib had referred to ASEAN as "a movement which we generally favored although not one in which we need to participate too directly" (U.S. Congress, H.R., *Hearings*, Nov. 18, 1975, p. 7). At the time, this somewhat distant view mirrored ASEAN's own. Officially nonaligned, it had been clearly anxious, especially in its formative years, not to be caught up in a close U.S. embrace. It had wanted also to avoid providing any support for the accusations emanating from Moscow and Beijing during ASEAN's early years that the organization was merely a SEATO in sheep's clothing.

By 1977, however, both ASEAN's view of itself and the way it was perceived elsewhere had changed. Its first summit meeting at Bali in February 1976 had been a gratifying demonstration of resilience and unity in the face of the new situation in Indochina. Beijing and Moscow had begun to take favorable note of the organization. ASEAN's international ties, developed in the form of economic "dialogues," had been established, first with the smaller Pacific powers—Australia, New Zealand, and Canada—then, after a digestive pause, with the great economic power, Japan. Its second summit in Kuala Lumpur in August 1977 had been followed by meetings there between the ASEAN leaders and their Australian, Japanese, and New Zealand counterparts, while immediately thereafter in Manila the Fukuda Doctrine had stressed Japan's interest in cooperation with ASEAN.

ASEAN was thus now more confident about undertaking ties with a superpower. At the same time, Carter Administration East Asian policymakers saw a relationship with ASEAN as fitting very well into a systematic effort to encourage a new, more positive, American image of Asia where American support for economic and social progress would replace the military-security emphasis of the past.

Rhetorical emphasis on economic cooperation notwithstanding, the meeting in Manila in September 1977 that inaugurated the "dialogue relationship" between the United States and ASEAN produced little. Indeed, in this and subsequent meetings, the United States found itself unable to respond positively to ASEAN positions stemming from North–South considerations—support for commodity funds and the like—or from desires for preferential treatment. However, as visits and meetings multiplied, the importance of ASEAN was given more symbolic weight, and dealings with it began to involve a fairly wide range of official and other Americans. This was particularly the case with Vice President Walter Mondale's visit to the region in May 1978. Although not all of the ASEAN countries were included on his itinerary, the trip was billed as an ASEAN-focused event, and the customary elaborate preparations helped to institutionalize the regional organization's new place in American foreign policy.

The locus in Washington of the second Ministerial Meeting between the United States and ASEAN in August 1978 also facilitated emphasis on the importance the United States now placed on the relationship. The presence of Secretary of State Vance and six other U.S. Cabinet members and a warm reception in the White House and on the Hill added a good deal to the political symbolism of the meeting, as did the fact that it provided the occasion for Secretary Vance to announce U.S. support for a major ASEAN objective, the proposal by the Group of 77 to establish a Common Fund to stabilize world commodity prices. At the same time, the United States was confirming its continued strategic interest in non-communist Southeast Asia. Grant military assistance was retained for Thailand and Indonesia in the FY 1978 budget despite initial strong congressional opposition. The vice president's trip had provided the occasion for reaffirming the commitment of the United States to the defense of Thailand as a bilateral as well as multilateral obligation under the Manila Pact—the first public statement of this commitment at so high a level since the end of the Indochina War. In addition, Mondale had assured both the Thais and the Indonesians that the United States would remain a reliable supplier of military equipment. Earlier doubts about the wisdom of seeking to retain the American bases in the Philippines had been resolved, and a visit by Assistant Secretary Holbrooke to Manila late in 1977 had provided the impetus for renewed negotiations which were completed successfully at the end of 1978.

Normalization Postponed

Meanwhile, interest in normalizing relations with Vietnam continued. In congressional testimony in early 1978 Holbrooke described the previous year as having produced "some slight but significant improvement in relations between the United States and Vietnam" (U.S. Congress, H.R., *Hearings*, March 14, 1978, p. 108). In May, Hanoi's acceptance of a long-standing American proposal that a Vietnamese expert team visit an American missing-in-action identification facility in Hawaii seemed to open up the prospect of some progress on that issue. Even so, when in July the Vietnamese began to drop hints to foreign diplomats, journalists, and congressional visitors that they were prepared to forego their demands for aid and enter into diplomatic relations without preconditions, the atmosphere was far different from what it had been in the spring of 1977.

While antagonism between Hanoi and Beijing had been steadily rising in Asia, in the Washington struggle over control of China policy the advantage now rested with the National Security Council and National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski. At the heart of the differences between Vance and Brzezinski on China's place in American foreign policy were crucially opposing views over the management of the U.S.–Soviet–Chinese triangle. The bitterness of the struggle, as the participants have subsequently described it, reflected not only the grave importance of the central questions at issue, but also the peculiar mystique that had come to surround China policy and its control since the secret Kissinger mission of 1971. And Vietnam had become inescapably part of the problem, as Hanoi's relations with China deteriorated and its ties to the Soviet Union grew closer.

As early as January 1978, with escalating hostilities on the Vietnamese border attracting international attention, Brzezinski had identified Vietnam as a Soviet surrogate. Visiting Beijing in May, he found the Chinese quick to denounce Vietnamese perfidy; within a month the Chinese were publicly describing Vietnam as the Asian Cuba. By July, Brzezinski was pointing to the sensitive state of normalization negotiations with China, now targeted for completion by December 15, as a reason for postponing normalization with Hanoi.

In the continuing debate, Vietnam's own actions were adding weight to the arguments for delay. In March, the draconian measures employed to enforce the abolition of private trade put an end to expectations of a gradualist economic policy. More portentously, they precipitated the boat people exodus. The astoundingly high levels of 75,000 a month were not to be reached until early in 1979. But even in May 1978 the refugee influx had begun to cause problems for ASEAN countries and to require American policy responses; in Bangkok the vice president announced that the United States would accept an additional 25,000 refugees from Southeast Asia annually and would provide up to $2 million to the Thai government to support the development of longer-term plans for refugee resettlement. Mounting numbers of refugees attracted increasingly unfavorable attention to Hanoi's policies, particularly as evidence accumulated that Vietnamese officials were forcing ethnic Chinese not only to leave but also to pay for the privilege of doing so.

Of growing concern also was the developing relationship between Hanoi and Moscow. Vietnam's abandonment in June of its earlier resistance to Soviet pressures to join COMECON (the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) was seen as strong, although not yet conclusive, evidence of an alliance in the making. Massive Soviet arms deliveries in the summer of 1978 pointed in the same direction, while the Soviet–Vietnamese Friendship Treaty of November 3, 1978, made it even more difficult to argue that a diplomatic relationship with Washington could be a strong counterweight to a mutually supportive Hanoi–Moscow tie.

Much earlier, however, the tide had begun to move decisively in favor of postponement. On September 27 when Vietnamese Deputy Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach finally gave official confirmation to Hanoi's willingness to abandon its preconditions, Holbrooke, meeting with him in New York, was unable to respond positively. By mid-October Carter had accepted Brzezinski's recommendation to postpone—whether for wholly "China reasons" or also because of concerns over the impact on the November elections of still another debatable foreign policy move, remains a matter of some dispute (Chanda, pp. 291, 292). Be that as it may, since the president's decision to postpone by no means precluded resuming negotiations with Hanoi in 1979 after normalization with China had been accomplished, State Department examination of the modalities of an eventual relationship continued. In December, however, the Vietnamese invasion and occupation of Cambodia put an end to prospects that, once diplomatic relations with Beijing were established, normalization negotiations with Hanoi would resume.

The Missing-in-Action Issue

Since the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia, the United States has defined withdrawal of Vietnamese troops and a political settlement as prerequisites for normalization of relations with Vietnam and has joined with ASEAN and other countries in putting pressure on Vietnam to this end.

Meanwhile, the principal negotiating contact with Vietnam has been on humanitarian issues—the missing-in-action, the orderly departure program for Vietnamese wishing to emigrate to the United States, and the resettlement in the United States of children of American fathers. The tone of these negotiations has been set largely by the Vietnamese, whose efforts to use the missing-in-action issue as a political bargaining weapon have been a major stumbling block. Very often, moreover, intermittent indications of a more cooperative Vietnamese attitude have been followed by disappointing performance. For some twelve months in 1985 and 1986, for example, it seemed as though a real breakthrough had been achieved. According to the *Washington Post*, an August 1985 meeting with Vietnamese officials was described by an American participant as the "most substantive and productive" yet held, "remarkable for the absolute absence of any linkage whatsoever to larger political issues." Thereafter, arrangements made in 1985 for joint excavation of a B-52 crash site were implemented in 1986. Also in 1986, further discussion of Hanoi's 1985 proposal for resolving the missing-in-action issue in two years produced an exchange of plans of work and new formal commitments by both sides: the United States would provide material assistance in support of further excavations and other such activities, and Vietnam would permit American experts to accompany its own experts on excavations in accessible areas. By the fall of 1986, however, the Vietnamese were once again cancelling scheduled meetings without explanation and the return of missing-in-action remains had ceased.

In 1987, the Administration undertook a new approach, in effect linking Vietnamese humanitarian concerns with American ones. As reported in the *Washington Post*, at the beginning of August another bilateral meeting—this one led at a high level on the American side by former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John. W. Vessey, Jr.—announced that measures had been agreed upon not only to accelerate missing-in-action accounting but also "to address certain humanitarian concerns of Hanoi." Since then, an American medical mission has studied requirements for prosthetic devices and rehabilitation for Vietnamese amputees; other such studies are in process; and the Administration has committed itself to facilitating the work of private voluntary organizations concerned with assisting the Vietnamese in this area. In September screening for the orderly departure program, suspended by the Vietnamese for over a year, was resumed and at the end of December, 356 people arrived in Bangkok en route to resettlement, including 65 Amerasians. On the missing-in-action issue, however, according to the *New York Times*, the State Department has described progress as "minimal" with only eight sets of remains returned in 1987.

The United States, ASEAN, And the Cambodian Hostilities

Since the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia, the U.S. relationship with ASEAN has solidified, not only as a result of cooperation on Indochina issues (including refugee problems and hostilities), but also because of a burgeoning economic relationship and the proliferation of other contacts and common interests and ties. In the public arena, frequent tribute is paid to ASEAN strength and cohesion as key factors in maintaining resistance to Vietnamese aggression and, more broadly, as making important contributions to the maintenance of American security interests in East Asia and the Pacific.

The United States has found it advantageous to support ASEAN positions and follow ASEAN leadership on Cambodian issues rather than to play the dominant role. Because a strong and self-confident ASEAN is important to the United States, the prestige ASEAN has gained from its generally skillful exercise of leadership is an American as well as ASEAN asset. Any danger that U.S. involvement in the Third Indochina War might be seen at home as likely to result in replaying the Second has been all but eliminated by the low American posture. ASEAN leadership has also facilitated the mobilization of Third World support behind pressures on Vietnam to withdraw. And it is probably fair to say that ASEAN has been able to deal with both Hanoi and the resistance to Hanoi with a degree of subtlety and desirable ambiguity that does not come easily to the United States.

Nevertheless, as the Cambodian hostilities have continued, some differences have arisen between the United States and ASEAN. One of these revolves around a possible conflict between U.S. interests in China and support for ASEAN. This concern arose most directly in the first year of the Ronald Reagan presidency. Already alarmed by the progress toward a U.S.–China military alliance that Secretary of State Alexander Haig's June 1981 visit to China seemed to portend, ASEAN was dismayed by the U.S. position at the International Conference on Kampuchea held in New York in July. The ASEAN approach called for strong barriers in any settlement agreement against the return to power of Beijing's Khmer Rouge protégés and for a more conciliatory approach to Vietnam than the Chinese at that time were willing to entertain. To ASEAN representatives, their failure to prevail seemed attributable to U.S. support for the Chinese position; they remained unconvinced by protestations that the United States had merely tried to steer a middle course and prevent the conference from breaking up over questions that could be deferred to what was probably a distant future. Since then, the official Chinese position has come much closer to ASEAN's. Even so, the ASEAN countries remain apprehensive that, in some future difference with China over Cambodia, the United States will again side with the Chinese. At the same time, they complain that the United States does not take sufficient advantage of its supportive relations with Beijing to induce the Chinese to alter their policies toward Vietnam in ways that might help break the Cambodian deadlock.

ASEAN approaches to the Khmer resistance factions have also posed policy problems for the United States. It has been much easier for ASEAN than for the United States to express strong opposition to Pol Pot's return to power and then to set the issue aside and accept the Khmer Rouge as inescapably part of the anti-Vietnamese alliance. As long as the Cambodian seat in the United Nations remained an issue, the United States stood with ASEAN in voting for its retention by Democratic Kampuchea. But it was extremely uncomfortable in doing so. And its continuing discomfort with the Khmer Rouge role in the opposition coalition was responsible for its cool response to the March 1986 eight-point negotiating proposal of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea calling for the establishment of a quadripartite coalition government.

At the same time, however, the United States has been reluctant to respond to ASEAN pressures for supplementing American humanitarian aid to the non-communist Khmer resistance with military assistance. Congressman Stephen Solarz was responsible for initiating legislation providing such assistance. Its commitment elsewhere to military aid for "freedom fighters" notwithstanding, the Administration did not welcome the Solarz proposal. Thus, according to a report in the *Washington Post*, in July 1985 Secretary of State George Shultz declared in Kuala Lumpur that the United States saw no special need for American assistance of this kind and could play a better role by providing food, clothing, medicine, and other supplies which "people need as much as they need guns." Arguing that over the long run humanitarian aid might be more sustainable, he warned his ASEAN audience that "Congress is a very changeable operation. They're in favor of something at one time and then some things can happen and they change their mind." As it emerged from Congress in August, the legislation did no more than authorize assistance of up to $5 million annually with no reference as to what might be provided. Thus far, the military assistance provided under the Solarz amendment has been limited to training programs and "non-lethal" equipment.

Normalization Opportunities Missed? 1977–1978

Analysts of American policy toward Vietnam between 1975 and 1978 frequently ask whether, because of the failure of normalization, the United States missed important opportunities to influence the subsequent course of events in Indochina. That the Socialist Republic of Vietnam missed an opportunity to normalize relations with the United States in 1977 is incontestable. That the United States missed such an opportunity in mid-1978 is arguable. It is at least possible that, had normalization been accomplished in 1977, the subsequent course of events would have been markedly altered; normalization in mid-1978 or later in the year would have been most unlikely to alter the course of events in any significant way.

Given the strength of American emotions on reparations—emotions that cut right across the political spectrum—normalization was impossible as long as Hanoi insisted on this precondition. Had Hanoi recognized this in 1977 and abandoned its preconditions in response to the well-intentioned new Administration, normalization would almost certainly have followed. While active proponents of normalization outside the Administration were few in number, neither were active opponents numerous. Moreover, that early in its term, the Administration could have counted on considerable leeway for foreign policy initiatives. The missing-in-action issue would probably have been manageable, especially with a little more finesse on Hanoi's part. Support on the Hill for increased contacts as a way of resolving the problem could have served to counteract opposing demands for a full accounting as a precondition to normalization.

The international circumstances were also propitious. Hanoi could not yet be tagged as a member of the Soviet bloc; it still seemed to be seeking some balance in its relations with Moscow and Beijing and more active relations with the West. The Chinese, still trying to steer something of a middle course between Cambodia and Vietnam, were conveying to American interlocutors their support for U.S.-Vietnamese normalization as a way of reducing Moscow's opportunities to draw Hanoi into its orbit. ASEAN, although concerned over what seemed to be an excessive American focus on former enemies at the expense of old friends, nevertheless favored an American-Vietnamese relationship (if not carried too far), because, it was hoped, such a relationship would nudge Hanoi toward moderation domestically and in its relations with its neighbors.

It is at least possible that normalization in 1977, especially if it had come early in the year, might have had some influence on the subsequent course of events. Improved prospects for trade and investment from the United States and the West might have strengthened trends toward moderation in Vietnamese economic policy. If so, this might have given Vietnam's overseas Chinese commercial class more breathing space, thus removing one irritant—although others would have remained—in relations between Hanoi and Beijing. It might also have resulted in a greater variety of profitable ties between Vietnam and non-communist countries, and the desire to maintain such ties might have deterred open aggression. Here, however, the customary expectations of national leaders that they can eat their cake and have it too must be factored in. Another important shadow on this optimistic scenario is the unlikelihood that the mere opening of diplomatic relations between Washington and Hanoi would have given the Khmer Rouge a reason to abandon its suicidally provocative course. Khmer Rouge persistence in turn would have confronted China and Vietnam with dilemmas, the response to which would have been dictated by vital security concerns for which the United States had neither responsibility nor remedies.

The Vietnamese clearly missed an opportunity in 1977; the United States may have missed an opportunity in mid-1978. Had Washington responded immediately to Hanoi's hints of July and had Hanoi immediately made its position official, the path toward normalization might at least have been less obstructed than it was to become later in the year. The argument for counteracting Soviet influence through normalization with Hanoi might have been more persuasive while the significance of Hanoi's membership in COMECOM was still uncertain. Brzezinski was already on the other side, but he had not yet persuaded the President, who was only beginning to face the foreign policy difficulties—heightening opposition to the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT II), Soviet adventurism in Africa, the collapse of Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi of Iran, and the like—that mounted as the mid-term elections approached.

But a normalization process set in train in mid-1978 almost certainly would not have altered the view already prevailing in Hanoi that Vietnamese security required the extirpation of the Pol Pot regime. Nor could it have altered the conclusion that had been made so inescapable by the fratricidal purge of suspected Vietnamese sympathizers in Cambodia's East Zone in May and June, and by other events as well, that, although a Khmer cover was desirable, if Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge were to be eliminated as quickly and completely as Vietnamese security interests required, a major and conspicuous involvement of the People's Army of Vietnam would be inevitable. Indeed, all of the evidence so brilliantly marshalled by Nayan Chanda in *Brother Enemy* points to the conclusion that, when

Hanoi reached out to the United States and ASEAN in mid-1978, it had in mind no more than the hope of moderating their reactions (and perhaps Beijing's) to an already determined course of action.

As much in July as in September the principal contenders were embarked on a collision course. The Vietnamese had already begun to call for the overthrow of the Pol Pot regime and to organize the force that was to be surfaced in November as the Khmer National United Front for National Salvation. The Chinese had made their last attempt to induce caution in Phnom Penh at the beginning of the year with Deng Yingzhao's visit. This failing, they had thrown their support unequivocally behind Pol Pot both in public statements and in supplying military equipment. Beijing's denunciations of Vietnam to domestic and foreign audiences were being reciprocated by Hanoi which, in July, identified China as the main culprit behind Cambodia's provocations. Moscow, perceiving increased dangers of hostile encirclement as the militant Brzezinski line seemed to be taking possession of American China policy and the Japanese had agreed to an anti-hegemony clause in their August 1978 Peace and Friendship Treaty with China, was all the more anxious to consolidate its relationship with Hanoi. Moscow's payment for the new alliance, even before it was formalized in November, began in August with a massive arms airlift to Vietnam.

New Opportunities Today?

In many ways, American policy toward Vietnam and its Cambodian venture has been eminently successful. It has been pursued consistently and steadily by two administrations. It has been either ignored by the general public or accepted with approval. It has not precipitated significant conflict between the executive and legislative branches or caused major struggles within the executive branch. These are perhaps negative virtues. On the positive side, it has strengthened the relationship between the United States and ASEAN and avoided a clash of views with Beijing in an area of much more immediate concern to China than to the United States. In the United Nations it has brought the United States into a rather rare alliance with a large majority of Third World countries.

In the Indochina theater, U.S. policy accomplishments have been less weighty. U.S. support of ASEAN-organized pressures has been an important factor in keeping Hanoi from attaining international recognition for its puppet regime. The avowed commitment of the United States to Thailand's security and American military assistance have contributed to the pressures on Hanoi for caution on the Thai–Cambodian border, although Chinese policy constitutes a more important deterrent. But the hostilities continue and, meanwhile, the Russians continue to increase their military use of facilities in Vietnam.

These disadvantages do not seem to weigh very heavily either with the Administration or with the general public. They do, however, prompt occasional criticism, usually in articles in learned journals, describing American policy as excessively supine—in the words of one writer as "a case of strategic surrender" (Buszynski).

Although the prescriptions for change that critics offer may vary, their analyses of the principal factors in the situation and the obstacles to settlement are markedly similar and do not differ radically from those of supporters of the present policy. Chinese policy and Chinese–Vietnamese relations are almost universally seen as constituting the most significant factor in the Cambodian equation. Most regard Chinese assent as essential to the survival of any settlement and Soviet support as an important contribution to Hanoi's obduracy. In the view of most, deadlock persists in part because China and the Soviet Union both prefer the present situation to any alternative they can envisage: they do not find the costs excessive; neither is likely to permit Cambodia to become an obstacle to mutually profitable understandings on other matters; and the U.S.S.R., although it would probably welcome a more conciliatory policy on Hanoi's part, will not risk its military access to Vietnam by pressing for changes in Cambodian policy.

ASEAN is criticized as unrealistic for expecting too much from the pressure it applies. Hanoi is seen as unwilling to jeopardize its control of Cambodia by any real concessions, at least as long as its confrontation with Beijing persists. Military pressures are not seen as achieving a decisive outcome for either side; Hanoi cannot be expelled by the anti-Vietnamese guerrillas, but it cannot eliminate them either—although it can contain them.

The advantages and dangers of the present situation are also seen similarly by both critics and supporters of the current U.S. policy. The advantages cited include the greater integration of ASEAN that its Cambodian response has brought about, the consolidation of the relationship between the United States and ASEAN, and the avoidance of total confrontation by the Southeast Asian contenders. The disadvantages most emphasized by those who would encourage some change in American policy are the opportunities the present situation provides for undue Soviet and/or Chinese influence in the region. Others cited include the continued polarization of Southeast Asia; the still explosive potential of great-power involvement; the dangers to Thailand—on the one hand, a Vietnamese attack, on the other hand, interruption of present trends toward civilian, constitutional government; and the danger to ASEAN of continued differences between Thailand and Indonesia over how the situation should be handled.

Clearly critics of American policy appreciate the intractability of the causes of the long-standing stalemate. But they glimpse opportunities in Hanoi's resentment of its dependence on Moscow and in its intermittent suspicions that Moscow once again is about to abandon Vietnam; in indications that Hanoi is now giving more serious and realistic attention to its grievous economic problems; and in prospects that some shift in the relations between China and Vietnam might come out of Chinese–Soviet discussions, although as yet such a shift is very dimly seen.

Most prescriptions for a new or altered American policy intend to improve the prospects for breaking the present stalemate and bringing the war to an end. Others, however, look to an increase in American pressures which, while they may prolong the war, will increase the costs to Vietnam and add to the prospects for a more satisfactory solution in the long run.

Those who advocate the latter course believe that the United States should provide military assistance to the non-communist elements of the Khmer resistance. However, they do not expect that the United States can aid the resistance to the point where military victory might be in its grasp. Rather, they argue that increasing pressures on Hanoi has its utility. Even more, however, and in line with some ASEAN views, American military assistance is advocated as a way of balancing both Khmer Rouge and Chinese roles. According to this view, U.S. military assistance will improve the non-communists' morale, their ability to attract recruits, and their fighting strength. That in turn will improve their ability to compete with the Khmer Rouge now and later to frustrate the attempts of the Khmer Rouge to dominate or even to participate in a coalition government. Similarly, the United States, through its larger role, would gain a better comparative position vis-a-vis China in efforts to influence the course of events.

Those who advocate a more vigorous American effort to bring the war to an end generally link a more conciliatory posture toward Vietnam with new diplomatic pressures on ASEAN and China. Normalization with Hanoi is urged as a way of encouraging Vietnam to compromise. Once Vietnam has access to Western aid and trade, it will be able to distance itself from the U.S.S.R. At the same time Vietnam's fears of an independent Cambodia as a threat to its security can be reduced by persuading ASEAN to abandon its support for the resistance and China to recognize that its policies serve only to drive Vietnam more securely into the Soviet embrace—to the detriment of both Chinese and American interests. The impact of this mix of inducements to Hanoi and pressures on others should serve to convince Hanoi that the other actors concerned have recognized the legitimate interests of Vietnam in Cambodia. Then Vietnam's interests would no longer need to be protected by an army of occupation and a puppet government, and Vietnam's subordinate relationship to the Soviet Union would no longer need to be tolerated.

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It is difficult to quarrel with the critics' view of the dangers and disadvantages of the present situation in Indochina, although it is possible to differ on the importance of some of them. Nor can one quarrel with the conditions of the preferred outcome most outline: a political settlement responsive in a balanced way to the security concerns of Vietnam, China, and ASEAN; improved prospects for a Southeast Asian community encompassing both ASEAN and Indochina; and a reduction of the role in Southeast Asia of the Soviet Union and, for some, of China as well.

But as Michael Leifer in his own examination of the subject has commented, "In ideal terms, of course, it is not difficult to suggest a formula for peace. . . . But to state that formula is only to state the fundamental problem in facile as well as ideal terms. Before such a formula could be close to application, there would have to be a significant change in the basic positions of the entrenched adversaries . . . " (Leifer, p. 636). It is these basic positions that the United States lacks the leverage to alter in any significant way, whether by acceptable pressures on its friends or feasible inducements to its adversaries. Mere normalization with Vietnam, as some urge, would, of course, require no leverage. Nor, as most admit, would it procure any. Under present circumstances, however, it would certainly damage American relations with important partners, China and ASEAN, and in the case of the latter, constitute also a real blow to its prestige and strength. Moreover, if as now appears at least possible, Vietnam's dire economic straits are driving Hanoi to consider softening its terms on Cambodia, the embargo on investment and aid, in which the United States does play a central role, will indeed have proved itself as an effective pressure that should not be abandoned prematurely.

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11.

The U.S. Congressional Perspective On an "Emerging" Indochina

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It is an act of faith to argue that Indochina is "emerging" or that the U.S. Congress would have any perspective on such a dramatic development. Nonetheless, it is worthwhile to contemplate a number of questions touching Indochina and the disposition of Congress in the next few years. What do the members of Congress think about normalization of relations with Vietnam? Will there be movement toward normalization before 1989? How strongly does Congress feel about the missing-in-action/prisoner-of-war issue, and would it support normalization without satisfactorily resolving all U.S. concerns on this issue beforehand? Does Congress believe that American servicemen are being held in Indochina against their will? Is there durable support for the policy of no relations with Vietnam until the Cambodia problem is settled, in accordance with the interest of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)? How passionate are feelings about Amerasians, reeducation camps, the Orderly Departure Program and Cambodian refugees? How does Congress view the Soviet presence in Indochina? Is China's strategic interest in Indochina appreciated? These are obvious questions. Given the history of America's traumatic involvement in Indochina, it would be hard to imagine any administration pursuing a sustained policy there without congressional acquiescence, if not positive support.

In the late 1960s, Indochina dominated the hearings of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee under Chairman William Fulbright. History was made in these hearings as the United States attempted to extricate itself from the Vietnam entanglement. This preoccupation continued in the 1970s under Fulbright's successor, Senator Frank Church, as American policy was critically examined in light of the war's "lessons." Geographically, there were repercussions well beyond Indochina. Psychologically, President John F. Kennedy's inaugural call to "go anywhere, pay any price" no longer found support in the American electorate. American foreign policy remains heavily influenced by the Indochina experience and subsequent national self-examination.*

Since 1980, other foreign policy issues have overshadowed Indochina in the Foreign Relations Committee and elsewhere in Congress. Only in the House Foreign Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs has there been a thoughtful examination of issues touching Indochina, thanks largely to Chairman Stephen Solarz. While Solarz' extraordinary zeal in conducting his own foreign policy has not delighted the executive branch, in recent years his subcommittee has been about the only serious congressional venue for vetting the Administration's Indochina policy.

Mixed Emotions

Beyond the Solarz subcommittee (and a broader interest in the missing-in-action/prisoner-of-war issue), there is no well defined "congressional attitude" toward Indochina. Americans and their elected representatives are ambivalent, caught between the desire to understand what went wrong and the counter-impulse to block out the whole mess—or view the war through cinema prisms like "Platoon" or "Full Metal Jacket." With foreign policy deliberations taking place against a backdrop of domestic imperatives, Capitol Hill's attitudes on Indochina are shaped as much by emotion as by reason—it is, after all, only twelve years since the helicopter lift-off from Embassy Saigon and Ambassador John Gunther Dean's departure from Phnom Penh, the flag clasped to his breast. Three prime sentiments, it seems to me, shape congressional thinking about Indochina: *hostility, apprehension,* and *indifference.* Future administrations will have to take this odd mixture into account in pursuing a coherent policy toward the region.

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* For an excellent chronology of Indochina policy, legislation, votes, and prohibitions on the President as a consequence of the war see *Congress and the Nation*, Vol. IV (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, 1976), pp. 890–909.

Ask a member of Congress about Indochina: he or she will reply in terms of Vietnam. Only as an afterthought will regional geopolitics come up. Cambodia will be recalled because of the Khmer Rouge's excesses, Laos vaguely recognized as a small part of the Indochina equation. But the sweep of history was in Vietnam, from Dienbienphu through Tet 1968 to the April 1975 debacle. Vietnam is responsible for 55,000 dead American boys and for the humiliation of the first national war defeat for the United States. For American voters standing before the black granite scrolls of the Vietnam Memorial, the geopolitics of Indochina are remote, but emotions are strong. Their elected representatives reflect this gut reaction.

Congressmen do not refer to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam by its proper name, a fact which bespeaks both ignorance and a residual hostility broadly if subliminally felt on Capitol Hill. They speak of "North Vietnam" or "the Vietcong" or simply "Hanoi," not the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, despite the reality that it now controls 45 million people living in all areas of Vietnam. Intellectually, unification of the country under communist rule is accepted by most; emotionally, it sticks in the craw. "Liberation," as applied to South Vietnam, is not in the congressional lexicon. The advent of the Reagan Administration and the election of a number of young, activist conservatives to Congress may explain this emotional hostility, but it is also part of a wider pattern of national assertiveness that has become fashionable. The Rambo movies appeal to a sentiment already part of the American psyche—and not entirely as a result of the Vietnam War.

Even among congressional liberals there is an element of distaste, or at least wariness, which is articulated indirectly by criticism of reeducation camps, support for Cambodian refugees, and the like. In the 1970s members used the "arrogance of power" argument; now they prefer to use the rubric of "the lessons of Vietnam" when talking about a potentially reckless involvement in Central America or Angola. There is little sympathy on either side of the aisle for Hanoi. Congressmen who once had kind words for the National Liberation Front or criticized Nguyen Van Thieu's tiger cages are today discreetly silent, and one hears no floor speeches by the liberals praising Vietnam's post-1975 human rights record or economic achievements. Any statements regarding normalization with Vietnam—and they are few—are couched in terms of American strategic interests, not "reconciliation" or "healing the wounds of war."

At the moderate center of both parties, where Congressmen are most comfortable, there is no sympathy for Vietnam. Congressmen listen to the mood of the average American, who is neither a Rambo freak, nor an anti-war activist, nor an incisive analyst of the history of the 1960s. There is resentment over the humiliation the United States suffered at the hands of the Vietnamese communists and a basic conviction that whatever tactical errors and misjudgments the United States may have committed, the nation's motives were honest. There is resentment over "spin-offs" from the war that still hurt our society. For example, most Americans make a straight-line connection between the Vietnam War and the current drug problems in the United States. Heavy news coverage of anything concerning the missing in action or prisoners of war reinforces the belief that the United States is still being victimized by Vietnam. Few Congressmen would see any political mileage in trying to change this mind-set. Fewer still would see a good policy reason to do so under present circumstances.

Legislatively, there is also apprehension. No one wishes to be accused of "getting the United States back into Vietnam" or risking a single U.S. life—or dollar—on an Indochina project. Fear of involvement emerges daily with regard to Central America, where much the same argument is used by both proponents and opponents of aid to the Contras. If the United States aids the Contras, it risks "another Vietnam" through creeping American involvement; if it does not aid the Contras, it is sure to have "another Vietnam" because it will have to invade Nicaragua to remove the Cubans and the Soviets. The lesson is clear, and no Congressman finds merit in advocating another Vietnam experience anywhere in the world.

In addition to fears of military involvement, many Americans remain shocked by the inability of the United States to figure out the Vietnamese, even when the United States and Vietnam were intimately involved. America, the advanced industrial society, the master problem-solver, meets a peasant rice culture—and loses. How this happened has been analyzed in dozens of capable books since 1975, from Gelb and Betts, through Harry Summers, Stanley Karnow and the inevitable Rand Corporation monographs.* One can dissect Vietnam and explain all the historical, political, social, and psychological reasons why the American effort ultimately failed. But most politicians do not study these painful questions methodically, nor do the voters who keep them in Congress. What lingers is a sense of bafflement and failure.

Indifference: The Unkindest Cut of All

The strongest feeling about Vietnam in Congress may well be indifference. For Hanoi it must be galling to know that the United States, apart from a vague hostility, does not really think *at all* about Vietnam. If there were no missing-in-action issue, scant attention would be paid to Vietnam. Congress and the public see the deplorable Cambodian affair drag on year after year. Refugees and boat people receive passing sympathy. The Soviets in Camranh and Danang stimulate *Washington Post* op-ed pieces and raise congressional hackles. But it is largely the missing-in-action/prisoner-of-war controversy that keeps Vietnam in the news for most Americans, and even that drops off the screen periodically.

How does this mixture of apprehension and indifference affect the potential role of Congress concerning Indochina? Translated into a determination to avoid the errors of the past, apprehension is healthy. The layer of scar tissue from Vietnam has left the United States better equipped to steer clear of ideological fancies and examine policy options with a cold eye. But because of the general indifference, in all likelihood any politician who proposes a constructive Indochina initiative will unfortunately find himself quite lonely.

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* Leslie H. Gelb and Richard K. Betts, *The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1979); Harry Summers, *On Strategy: The Vietnam War in Context* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1981); and Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: Viking, 1983).

On Capitol Hill, the political visibility of Indochina is almost nil compared with, for example, aid to the Contras, the U.S.–Japan trade imbalance, or arms control. For Indochina buffs, however, three issues are front-rank: the missing-in-action question, normalization of U.S. relations with Vietnam, and the strong Soviet presence in the region. A small collection of Congressmen and their staffs follow these questions regularly; were Indochina to move to center stage, they would be the focus of attention. All three questions are linked—indeed, they are probably inseparable.

MIA/POWs: The Politics of Hope

"The fullest possible accounting for our servicemen missing in Southeast Asia"—or the M.I.A./P.O.W. issue for short—has been the main U.S. interest in Indochina since 1973. Unfortunately, it dominates American thinking about Indochina and obscures broader American interests in the region. At the moment the issue is prominent and likely to remain so for the rest of the 100th Congress.

Most Congressmen cannot ignore the issue; it is kept alive by media coverage of a few activists, the popularity of the Rambo films, and macho-ultranationalist cults. Because no one can prove the nonexistence of Americans held alive in Indochina, it is safer to accept the possibility that some may still be there, either as captives or of their own volition. Over the years the way the Administration (and the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia) formulate the issue has changed. Until 1982 or 1983, the Administration tended to cast doubt on the possibility that Americans might still be held in Indochina. For the past several years, that possibility, while not encouraged, has been left open. Most prudent politicians running for reelection can make this distinction. The specter of Marine Private Robert Garwood accosting Western visitors in a

Hanoi hotel in 1979 after being missing in action for years is still in mind. There may be others like him out there. The "live sightings" issue is not assessed rationally according to the law of probability. It is an issue—and a relatively minor one among the array of problems a Congressman faces—which is preferably side-stepped or blurred by using the "we can't rule out the possibility" formula. Senator Alan Simpson, at a 1986 Veterans Committee hearing on live sightings, criticized an American adventurer as an opportunist preying on the hopes of bereft families for monetary gain. The individual, who claimed to have proof of live Americans being held in Laos, solicited money from U.S. sources to gain their rescue. His claims were never substantiated. This was a precise, flagrant case well developed over days of testimony, and Simpson was on firm ground. Still, in the past several years there have been few examples of Congressmen choosing to address the issue head on.

The original emphasis in both the Carter and Reagan Administrations was on "resolving the fate" of the missing in action, the great majority of whom are presumed to be dead. This effort required the active cooperation of the Vietnamese and the Laotians in providing remains and information which could put the minds of grieving families to rest. The live-sightings furor has not only shifted that emphasis, it may have retarded cooperation on the part of the Vietnamese. For recent congressional delegations visiting Hanoi, live sightings have been number one topic on the American agenda. During the visit of Senators Frank H. Murkowski and Dennis DeConcini, and Representatives Michael Bilirakis and Bob McEwen in January 1986 the live-sightings issue dominated the two-day discussion. In January 1987, Senators Mark Hatfield and James McClure visited Hanoi, talked with many of the same Vietnamese officials, and went over much the same ground on live sightings and the need for enhanced cooperation to resolve the M.I.A./P.O.W. issue.

The Vietnamese are by now familiar with the fixations of American congressional delegations, who tend to put subjects *they* and their constituencies deem important at the top of the agenda. Other topics may actually be of far greater interest substantively and are discussed indirectly or in special informal settings, as was the case with recent congressional delegations on the delicate subject of normalization. But the message on the political importance of the M.I.A./P.O.W.

issue, and the current prominence of live sightings, continues to be placed squarely up front for Hanoi to see.

Political Impact of MIA/POWs

The M.I.A./P.O.W. issue cannot be divorced from veterans affairs in general. Three organizations, the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Vietnam Veterans of America, are numerically large and enjoy grassroots influence at election time. Wise Congressmen do not ignore them. Leaders of these vets organizations honor the M.I.A./P.O.W. issue, and it becomes part of their menu of interests pursued on Capitol Hill. A large chunk of legislation on veterans affairs these days concerns primarily benefits and "recognition" for Vietnam veterans. The table below shows floor actions in the House and Senate during the 99th Congress (January 1985 to October 1986) on topics relating to Vietnam under the generic heading of "Vietnam." This table includes speeches, introduction of and debate on legislation, and votes during the entire session:

Subject	*Number of Actions*
Extension/modification of veterans benefits, veterans recognition, Vietnam Memorial(s), technicalities of veterans affairs	38
M.I.A./P.O.W.s, directly related to resolution of problem, negotiation, and specific recognition	11
Orderly Departure Program, mainly S. Res. 143*	4

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* Senate Resolution 143, introduced by Dennis DeConcini and Frank Murkowski, urged the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to cooperate in negotiations sponsored by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which stalled in December 1985. The resolution passed the Senate on July 15 and the House September 30, 1986.

Subject	*Number of Actions*
Anti-Contra aid statements by Vietnam vets	4
Aid to non-communist Cambodian resistance, mainly S. 960*	2
Commemorating tenth anniversary of war's end	1
Criticizing reported illegal transfer of technology to Vietnam	1
Thanking Thailand for help to Cambodian refugees	1
Total:	62

Analysis of floor actions in the 98th Congress (1983–1984) and 97th Congress (1981–1982) yields totals of 67 and 78, respectively, compared to 62 in the 99th Congress. In previous Congresses, floor actions were concentrated even more heavily on benefits and honorific recognition of Vietnam vets.**

So, what significance should be assigned to the M.I.A./P.O.W. issue in terms of congressional concerns? Does the issue have an impact on the emergence of Indochina? While few Congressmen give the issue top priority in their grand legislative scheme, a "defensive brief" on M.I.A./P.O.W.s is essential, along with a genuine commitment to do what is possible to keep faith with missing American men in Southeast Asia. In the Senate, Frank H. Murkowski, Dennis DeConcini, Alan Cranston, Alan K. Simpson, Mark O. Hatfield,

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* S. 960 is the Senate authorization bill for foreign assistance for fiscal year 1986. It was adopted August 8, 1985.

** This roughly categorized list is based on analysis of the Congressional Record compiled by the Congressional Research Service for the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. Obviously, not all "actions" have identical weight; some are minor compared, for example, to debate on S 960's aid to the Cambodian resistance provision.

Edward M. Kennedy, and a handful of others keep abreast of developments; in the House, Stephen Solarz, G.V. Montgomery, Gerald B. H. Solomon, Benjamin A. Gilman, Jim Leach, Robert J. Lagomarsino, Chester G. Atkins, Robert F. Smith, and Peter H. Kostmayer are among the most active. There is an awareness that the M.I.A./P.O.W. issue is highly charged politically and subject to exploitation by well-organized interest groups and the media, which can appeal to emotional public concern. There is some support in the House (and probably in the Senate) for legislation creating a special congressional commission under entrepreneur H. Ross Perot to investigate live sightings. Continuing Resolution 189 of the House of Representatives died in the 99th Congress but could be reintroduced in the 100th.* Although few Congressmen follow the issue's twists and turns (technical meetings, joint excavations, occasional communiques when remains are repatriated, etc.), there is recognition of the connection between concrete progress on the question and movement toward normalization. Both the United States and Vietnam disavow such connection, and the missing-in-action issue is studiously described as "humanitarian." But it is a political certainty that movement on normalization could only take place if the Administration satisfied Congress that the M.I.A./P.O.W. question could be better pursued in a normalized—or normalizing—atmosphere.

Normalization: What Do We Get Out of It?

The Vietnamese no longer expect normalization of relations with the United States to spring from some idealistic spirit of reconciliation. In 1976–1977, the Vietnamese were misled by their naive anti-war friends into believing that the American guilt complex would yield multi-billion dollar reparations as part of the deal. Hanoi assumed that the United States would honor Nixon's "best efforts" pledge to provide aid as part of the 1973 Paris Agreement, even though North Vietnam clearly violated the agreement in 1975.

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* H. Con. Res. 129 was submitted by Representative Hendon on April 24, 1985, and referred to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. Its purpose was "to establish a congressional committee . . . to determine whether or not United States prisoners of war are being held in Southeast Asia and to report to Congress appropriate action to effect the release of prisoners of war found to be alive."

This was a profound miscalculation. Hanoi probably now understands that its true "friends" more likely reside in the State or Defense Departments, where cold cost-benefit ratios can be realistically determined. A succession of congressional delegations have visited Hanoi over the years and the dialogue begun by President Jimmy Carter has continued under President Ronald Reagan. Concerning normalization, Congress has four general expectations.

First, observable progress on the M.I.A./P.O.W. issue would be essential to gain congressional support for normalization—or movement toward normalization. If Hanoi were to return scores of remains and come clean on the reported warehouse containing 400 sets of remains, that would be progress. A significant increase in the flow of useful information on how Americans actually died in Indochina (there are seventy well-documented "discrepancy cases" which Hanoi could probably resolve) and where remains are likely to be found would also be seen as progress. Congress would depend heavily on the Administration's technical experts to judge the genuineness of Vietnam's proposals on how to resolve the M.I.A./P.O.W. problem. In the end the decision would be taken at the policy level of State, Defense, and the National Security Council in consultation with key congressional leaders. The point is, there could be no murky language disguising false progress, no appearance of collusion (as some hard right critics of the Reagan Administration's M.I.A./P.O.W. policy have charged) which could betray the families of those missing in action.

The Vietnamese view discussions on the missing-in-action issue as the main thread of intercourse between the two countries—in the mating dance of normalization, the orchestra has one very loud tune. When the political will is present in Hanoi, progress on the issue will be made quickly, and when prospects for real progress toward normalization become brighter, the missing-in-action tune will be played even more energetically by the Vietnamese. Congressional delegations will be appropriately impressed.

The *second* expectation concerns the leadership of Congress and key committees (at a minimum, Foreign Relations, Foreign Affairs, and the two Armed Services committees). Members on these committees would have to be convinced that normalization carries with it improved long-term prospects of reducing the Soviet presence in Vietnam and Soviet influence generally in Indochina. As a body, Congress does not think geopolitically, but individual members do. Beyond the Foreign Relations Committee, Senators like William S. Cohen, John Glenn, Sam Nunn, to mention several who sit on the Armed Services Committee, would have to be satisfied that normalization is advantageous in cold geostrategic terms. Realistically, members would not expect the Vietnamese to cut their strong material, strategic, and ideological ties with the Soviets, or to ask the Soviets to leave Camranh and Danang overnight. But there is a perception that normalization is a powerful card which should be played only when the Vietnamese seem inclined to modify their present orientation over time and when other conditions in Southeast Asia support such change.

The *third* expectation is a satisfactory solution to the Cambodia problem. Congress would support, if not demand, this precondition for normalization. Cambodia's future is not the burning issue it once was. There is a lot of hand-wringing and rhetoric over Pol Pot's genocidal era. Among sophisticated observers such as Congressman Solarz and other members of his subcommittee, the need to maintain a common front with ASEAN is fully appreciated. The Administration, however, has remained adamant that normalization cannot progress without a settlement—or at least clear movement in that direction—and Congress would in all likelihood sustain this policy.

Fourth, Congress would expect the Vietnamese to be more forthcoming on humanitarian matters—Amerasian children, the Orderly Departure Program, and exit permits for reeducation camp people. Although there is a degree of apathy in Congress on these seemingly interminable problems, not to mention boat people and Cambodian refugees in Thailand, there is also a widely held belief that Vietnam has been cruel, uncooperative, and devious. In my view, it is unlikely that Hanoi, perceiving the wisdom of compromise to speed political progress, will be totally intransigent on humanitarian issues.

Economic Aid, the Trade Embargo and Claims

The four general expectations just discussed are roughly the parameters of the attitudes of Congress toward normalization. There is absolutely no sentiment for giving economic assistance to Vietnam as part of normalization. Foreign aid to *any country* is unpopular; "reparations" to Vietnam are unthinkable. Assuming that the present law prohibiting aid were changed, even small official humanitarian aid projects would find difficulty getting through the legislative process. "Cooperation," however, can have many meanings, and private humanitarian assistance might be feasible under certain circumstances. During the early Carter Administration lifting the trade embargo was part of the normalization package being negotiated with Hanoi. The idea met with favor on Capitol Hill, as important business interests (e.g., oil companies, Pan American Airways) made their views known. In 1987, there was no pressure for lifting the embargo before the relationship was normalized. No one expected Vietnam to help much in reducing America's international trade imbalance.*

There is, however, considerable pressure to have the U.S. government use frozen Vietnamese assets to pay off outstanding private claims against Vietnam in the amount of approximately $150 million. Settlement of claims generally takes place with the establishment of diplomatic relations, though there have been exceptions. During the 99th Congress the Administration waffled but finally came down mildly against such a move. During the 100th Congress, it is possible the Congress will simply legislate payment of the claims regardless of what the Administration says. There seems to be enough political steam behind the idea, particularly in the constituencies of key senators and representatives. Opinion is divided on what effect unilateral action on the claims issue would have on Vietnamese willingness to cooperate on the missing-in-action problem. The National Security Council, which is sensitive to the concerns of the National League of Families (the most influential public group on the missing-in-action issue), believes unilateral action on claims would damage progress on the missing-in-action issue and therefore would be politically undesirable for the Administration.

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* Under provisions of the Trading With the Enemy Act, as amended, the trade embargo against the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (in place since 1965 against North Vietnam) is renewed on an annual basis by Presidential determination. See Vladimir N. Pregelj, "U.S. Foreign Trade Sanctions Imposed for Foreign Policy Purposes in Force as of May 31, 1985," Report 85-781 E, June 18, 1985, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

The impact on normalization is less clear. Hanoi wants normalization badly; it might swallow unilateral U.S. action on the claims in favor of future economic benefits, assuming that normalization will come in due course. The Administration would find it undesirable to have Congress sally forth on its own on the claims issue, which bears directly on potential U.S.-Vietnam relations, but whether the Administration would decide to fight such claims legislation is quite another matter.

Cambodia: The Reagan Doctrine as Preached by Solarz

Congress has followed the policy line of the Carter and Reagan Administrations with regard to the Cambodia problem, namely: let ASEAN take the lead in seeking a political solution, provide moral and political support at the United Nations and elsewhere bilaterally, but keep a low profile. For Cambodia as elsewhere in Indochina, all the inhibitions about reinvolvement exist. In 1985, however, a new angle emerged which has preempted previous congressional attitudes. In the 99th Congress, overt aid to the noncommunist Cambodian resistance was proposed and shepherded through the legislative process *not* by the Reagan Administration but by Representative Solarz, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs. A liberal Democrat *par excellence*, Solarz is a charter member of the "class of '74" who entered Congress in the wake of Watergate. He was a vocal proponent of cutting off aid to the Thieu and Lon Nol governments in the waning days of the war.

It is thus supremely ironic that in 1985 Solarz emerged as the most articulate advocate of financial assistance to the anti-Vietnam guerrilla forces of the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (under Son Sann) and Prince Norodom Sihanouk. Solarz has consistently denied any inherent contradiction between aiding the Cambodian noncommunists and denying aid to the anticommunist resistance in Nicaragua and Angola. He supports U.S. aid to the Afghan *mujahideen*. Without plumbing the logic of Solarz's reasoning, it is enough to observe that his proposals for assistance to the noncommunists in Cambodia were initially opposed by the Reagan Administration, then accepted halfheartedly. It would have been ludicrous for a hard line Republican Administration not to embrace the idea of helping noncommunist freedom fighters, despite the manifold reservations about such involvement in Cambodia at this particular time. For his part, Solarz was prepared to fend off charges of hypocrisy and intellectual double-dealing, and he has managed to do so effectively from the beginning.

After negotiation with the Administration, Solarz's original proposal was scaled down to $5 million in fiscal year 1986, and only $3.5 million was eventually set aside for actual use in the programs agreed upon in consultation between the Congress and the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development. Solarz attempted to tie provisions of funds to "performance criteria" on the part of the resistance movements, such as small guerrilla unit operations inside Cambodia, reduction of reliance on base camps in Thailand, and development of a political cadre system. These restrictions were eventually diluted, although Solarz's main points about the intent of his legislation were made. The funds provided in fiscal years 1986 and 1987 under this legislation have been used for commodities, education, and training in Khmer camps under the control of the Khmer People's National Liberation Front and Sihanouk in Thailand or on the border.

Second Thoughts on Aid to the Resistance

The Solarz initiative met with broad approval in the Senate, which was then under Republican control—indeed, some Republicans probably regretted not having introduced the idea themselves. The only wrinkle came from Senator Murkowski, Chairman of the Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs. During floor debate and in Foreign Relations Committee discussions, Murkowski demanded that ASEAN declare publicly that its members were actively supporting the noncommunist Cambodian resistance through financial and material aid. Murkowski argued that the United States should not be the "point man" on overt aid, and that ASEAN should publicly display the courage of its convictions on Cambodia. Murkowski's floor amendment to the Foreign Assistance bill demanding assurances from the State Department on this score was eventually superseded by less precise language adopted by the Senate in conference with the House—no doubt to ASEAN's relief.

There are growing doubts about the future of the Khmer People's National Liberation Front and how well U.S. money is being spent. However, the overt aid program will probably continue to be funded in fiscal year 1988. There is a belief in some quarters that the Sihanouk forces, under Sihanouk's son, Prince Norodom Ranariddh, might prove a better bet.

It is remarkable that Democrats have spearheaded the initiative to aid the resistance; two other angles are also remarkable. First, there has been little public debate on the overt aid program. The Administration has not chosen to give it a high profile. Under the policy established by President Carter and continued by President Reagan, the United States has been content to let ASEAN take the lead on efforts to find a political solution to the Cambodia problem. Pressure from the Cambodian resistance on Vietnam is certainly part of this strategy, but the United States has carefully avoided upstaging ASEAN on any tactical aspect of a struggle which may last years.*

Second, there has been virtually no discussion of covert support for the noncommunist resistance, in keeping with the Reagan Doctrine. With the political furor surrounding Central America and the publicity given to U.S. support for Afghan freedom fighters (which was originally covert), Indochina has remained almost unnoticed as an arena for bashing the communists covertly. Covert U.S. support for the Cambodian resistance has been reported in the media on occasion but has received little attention on the Hill outside the relevant committees. It will be interesting to see how this aspect of "emerging Indochina" will be treated, if at all, with the Democrats in control of both the Senate and House during the 100th Congress.

Laos: All but Forgotten

Shortly after assuming office in 1961, President Kennedy reportedly exclaimed to his staff, "Ike spent all that time briefing me on Laos. He never even mentioned Vietnam!" In 1987, it is Laos which is largely overlooked among the Indochina countries. Few Congressmen would recall that the United States has maintained diplomatic relations with Laos. Congressional visits to Vientiane are rare and generally in association with a longer stop in Hanoi. The prime topic of interest—actually the only topic—is the missing-in-action, thanks to the Laotian government's slightly more cooperative attitude, which has resulted in planned or completed joint excavations of crash sites of U.S. aircraft. The Laotian government, however, will never get far out in front of Vietnam's policy on cooperation.

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* See Angelo Codevilla, "The Reagan Doctrine—(As Yet) a Declaratory Policy," *Strategic Review* (United States Strategic Institute) 14 (Summer 1986), pp. 17-26, for a discussion of the Reagan Doctrine applied in Nicaragua, Angola, and Afghanistan—but not in Cambodia.

In one sense, ignorance may be a blessing. Realistically, the Laotians and the Americans have very little to talk about beyond the missing in action. Both governments recognize tacitly that the relationship has limited political potential at present; cooperation on the missing-in-action issue provides a useful "humanitarian" activity to pass the time. Although the Laotians are not happy with what they see as a one-way street, the State Department is perfectly correct in not loading on new elements which the Congress, for all its lack of interest, would find objectionable. A case in point is the occasional provision of rice to Laos as disaster relief at times of natural catastrophe. There must be full justification to satisfy congressional committee staffs, who are only too ready to find that the U.S. Agency for International Development is misusing the disaster relief authority for some harebrained scheme. Supplying rice in emergencies serves both a humanitarian and a political purpose, and when it is explained carefully to those Congressmen who care, the rationale is usually accepted. However, as long as Laos is seen as a vassal of Vietnam, potential congressional disapproval of helping a communist Laos is a danger not to be ignored. Even raising U. S. representation from chargé to ambassador status would have to be carefully explained in terms of potential political gain.

To date there has been scant public attention paid to the anticommunist insurgency in Laos, either in hearings or in floor statements. Given close U.S. ties to its former Hmong allies, this apathy is somewhat surprising. In states with significant Hmong populations (Minnesota, California) individual Congressmen may follow General Vang Pao's efforts to obtain support for the insurgency. No groundswell of enthusiasm is yet discernible.

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Indochina and the Next Year In Congress

What can be expected between now and the 1988 presidential election? Except for Representative Solarz, Congress has not been the driving force behind policy initiatives on anything touching Vietnam or Indochina as a whole. On Cambodia, with the notable exception of Solarz's initiative, Congress has been passive and agreeable to letting the Administration take the lead. This passivity could end if the Democratic majority on the Foreign Relations Committee decided to explore the situation in Indochina and normalization in the context of the geopolitical stakes for the United States in Southeast Asia. The chairman of the East Asian and Pacific Affairs Subcommittee, Senator Alan Cranston, would have to become active on Indochina. There is new leadership in Hanoi, and people in California are probably more alert to Indochina affairs than elsewhere in the country. It could be an interesting gambit for the Democrats to explore.

Will Congress beat the drum for normalization? Probably not, simply because there is little political payoff in the pre-election environment. More likely is a Democratic stance during hearings that would show the Democratic majority on the Foreign Affairs and Foreign Relations Committees to be hard-nosed *realpolitik* strategic thinkers determined to reduce Soviet influence in Southeast Asia. This would be good politics, balancing Republican charges of "softness" in Central America. With a new administration in 1989, more congressional support for U.S. leadership in efforts to obtain a Cambodia settlement might be expected. But it is too much to expect that the Congress would become the driving force behind a long-term, regionwide diplomatic effort to regulate affairs in Indochina or to reduce the Soviet presence, in cooperation with China and ASEAN. Quite correctly, such a bold initiative would have to come from the administration. Careful attention to congressional concerns would be an essential ingredient of a policy having any hope of success. While Congress may not be inclined to initiate Indochina policy, it has the power to hamper and even block executive branch initiatives in the direction of a more activist, participatory role for the United States.

The Vessey Mission: Broadening the Dialogue

The visit to Hanoi in August 1987 by Special Presidential Emissary General John Vessey, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has added an important new ingredient to the dialogue between the United States and Vietnam. It has also underscored the tactical utility of the missing-in-action issue, however abnormal current U.S. relations with Vietnam may be. General Vessey's delegation had three plenary sessions with Vietnamese counterparts; the general met privately with Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach four times. The Vietnamese agreed to "accelerate their efforts to help find [U.S.] missing in Vietnam," a formulation used frequently after other meetings.

Vastly more significant was an American commitment "to look into certain humanitarian concerns the Vietnamese have that are fallout from the war in Southeast Asia," in General Vessey's words at an August 10 press conference. With this bland statement, the substance of the U.S. relationship with Vietnam has been changed and new avenues opened up. A U.S. team of prosthetics experts subsequently visited Vietnam to view firsthand problems of the physically disabled. Other teams will make similar visits later.

This "humanitarian" commitment is an American *quid pro quo* to ease Vietnamese cooperation on the missing in action. Although both sides reaffirmed no linkage to broader political issues such as normalization, trade, or economic aid, the Vessey visit and its aftermath are designed to improve the bilateral climate. For Hanoi, this unprecedented U.S. involvement in Vietnam's humanitarian concerns is helpful well beyond assistance with prosthetics.* It represents another step in the erosion of the country's painful international isolation and could help those Politburo members arguing for an opening to the United States. It dilutes U.S. criticism of Japan and ASEAN for permitting commercial ventures with Vietnam, which are supposed to be taboo as penalty for the continued occupation of Cambodia.

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* Regarding its considerable significance, see "U.S. Will Back Aid to the Vietnamese in Charity Cases; Data on GI's Sought," *New York Times*, September 6, 1987, p. 1. A "senior official familiar with the dealings with the Vietnamese" is quoted as saying, "This means we crossed a line we never crossed before. . . . "

(ASEAN still prohibits government-to-government assistance.) It introduces the kind of benefit Vietnam could expect to gain from a normalized relationship with the United States, even without "official" economic assistance. Finally, it opens the political door to an expansion of the dialogue between Vietnam and the United States and to that quasi-diplomatic world of ping-pong and scientific exchanges. With the Vessey mission, a sophisticated variation has been added to the art form of normalization. Hanoi, however, must still make a far greater effort regarding the missing-in-action, and Cambodia remains a serious roadlock to any improvement of relations. How quickly the Vietnamese choose to move on these twin problems is now the question.

Biographical Sketches

Frederick Z. Brown is currently a Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. From March 1984 through February 1987 he was professional staff member for East Asia and the Pacific on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Previously he was a U. S. Foreign Service Officer with postings in Vietnam, Thailand, France, Cyprus, and the Soviet Union. In 1977–1978 he was Country Director for Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. In Vietnam he was Consul General in Danang (1971–1973) and a provincial adviser in Vinh Long (1968–1970).

MacAlister Brown is Professor of Political Science at Williams College. From 1974 to 1984 he served as Chairman of the Political Economy Program. He was a Fulbright Lecturer at Tribhuwan University, Nepal, from 1968 to 1969 and at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand, from 1980 to 1981 and from 1984 to 1985.

Nayan Chanda was born and educated in India. As the Indochina correspondent of the *Far Eastern Economic Review,* he covered the fall of Saigon and subsequent developments in Indochina. His book on the origins and development of the Third Indochina War, *Brother Enemy: The War After the War,* was published in 1986. Mr. Chanda is currently the Washington, D. C., correspondent of the *Far Eastern Economic Review.*

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Don Oberdorfer has been covering diplomatic news for the *Washington Post* since February 1976. Earlier he was a White House correspondent and columnist for the *Post* and Northeast Asia correspondent based in Tokyo. He began his professional career as a reporter on the *Charlotte Observer* in 1955, becoming that newspaper's Washington correspondent in 1958. From 1961 to 1965 he was a Washington editor and contributing editor of the *Saturday Evening Post.* He was national affairs correspondent for the Knight Newspaper chain from 1965 to 1968, during which time he made several lengthy trips to Indochina and covered the Vietnam War at home and abroad. Mr. Oberdorfer is the author of *Tet!,* a political–military history of the decisive battle of the Vietnam War.

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Joseph J. Zasloff is Professor of Political Science at the University of Pittsburgh. From January through April 1987, he was a Scholar-in-Residence at the Center for the Study of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Service Institute, Department of State. He has served as a visiting professor at the University of Saigon, the University of the Philippines, and the University of Nice. Dr. Zasloff has also served in instructional and consulting capacities for the Department of State, the Agency for International Development, the Peace Corps, and the Rand Corporation.

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Diane B. Bendahmane is a Washington-based editor and publications specialist with experience in international relations and development assistance. She has worked for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the Inter-American Foundation, A. T. International, and *Foreign Policy* quarterly. For the past several years she has worked as general editor of books published by the Center for the Study of Foreign Affairs.

Appendices

Agreement on the Restoration of Peace and Reconciliation in Laos, February 21, 1973

In response to the august desire of His Majesty the King and the earnest hope of the entire Lao people who wish to end the war soon, to restore and preserve a durable peace, and to achieve national reconciliation to unify the nation, and establish its independence, neutrality, democracy and prosperity so it may play a role in the development of Indochina and Southeast Asia.

Based on the 1962 Geneva Agreement concerning Laos and the current situation in Laos, the Vientiane government side and the Patriotic Forces side have agreed unanimously as follows:

PART 1

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Article 1

A. The intention of the Lao people is to firmly preserve and resolutely apply basic and inviolable national rights, such as the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Laos.

B. The Declaration on the Neutrality of Laos, dated July 9, 1962, and the 1962 Geneva Agreements on Laos are the correct bases for the peaceful, independent and neutral foreign policy for the Kingdom of Laos; the Lao parties concerned, the United States, Thailand and other foreign states must scrupulously respect and apply them. The internal problem of Laos must be solved by the Lao people themselves without foreign interference.

C. Given the noble goal to restore peace, consolidate independence, achieve national reconciliation and unite the nation, and given the present situation in Laos, in which there are two zones and two separate administrations, the Lao internal problem must be solved in accordance with the spirit of national reconciliation, based on the principle of equality and mutual respect without either side pressuring or annexing the other.

D. To preserve national independence and sovereignty, promote national reconciliation and unite the country, it is necessary to carefully observe the rights and freedoms of the people, such as: individual liberty, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, freedom to form political parties and associations, freedom to vote and to run for office, freedom of travel, freedom of residence, freedom of trade, and freedom to own personal property; all laws, regulations and organizations prohibiting the above-mentioned rights must be abolished.

PART 2

ARTICLES CONCERNING MILITARY AFFAIRS

Article 2

At 1200 noon on February 22, 1973, Vientiane time, a ceasefire-in-place will be carried out fully and simultaneously throughout Laos, including the following:

A. Foreign countries will cease completely and permanently the bombing of all Lao territory, will cease intervention and aggression in Laos, and will cease all military involvement in Laos.

B. All foreign armed forces will completely and permanently cease all military activities in Laos.

C. All armed forces of all Lao factions will cease completely all military activities that constitute hostilities toward one another, both on the ground and in the air.

Article 3

Following the ceasefire:

A. Ground or air forces are forbidden all activities to attack, annex, threaten and enter territory temporarily under the control of the other side.

B. All military actions which constitute other hostile acts are forbidden, including banditry, suppression, armed activities, and espionage by air and ground means. If one side wishes to resupply its own side with foodstuffs by passing through the zone of the other side, the committee to implement the agreement will consult and agree on establishing specific measures for this.

C. All "sweep" operations, terrorism and suppression which endanger the lives and property of the people, as well as acts of revenge and discrimination against people who have cooperated with the opposite side during the war, are forbidden; one should help the people who were forced to flee from their homes during the war to be free to return and earn a living according to their wishes.

D. It is forbidden to bring into Laos all types of military personnel, regular troops and irregular troops of all kinds and all kinds of foreign-made weapons or war material, except for those specified in the Geneva Agreements of 1954 and 1962. In case it is necessary to replace damaged or worn-out weapons or war materials, both sides will consult and arrive at an agreement.

Article 4

Within a period no longer than 60 days, counting from the date of establishment of the Provisional Government of National Union and the Joint National Political Council [later known as the National Political Consultative Council, NPCC], the withdrawal of foreign military personnel, regular and irregular, from Laos, and the dismantling of foreign military and paramilitary organizations must be totally completed. "Special forces"—organized, trained, equipped and controlled by foreigners—must be disbanded; all bases, military installations and positions of these forces must be liquidated.

Article 5

Both Lao sides will return to each other all persons regardless of nationality that were captured, and those imprisoned for cooperating with the other side, during the war. Their return will be carried out according to the procedures set up by the two sides, and, at the latest, must be completed within 60 days following the establishment of the Provisional Government of National Union and the Joint National Political Council.

After all those who were captured have been returned, each side has the duty to gather information on those missing during the war and report the information to the other side.

PART 3

ARTICLES CONCERNING POLITICS

Article 6

General elections shall be held in accordance with the principles of freedom and democracy in order to elect a National Assembly and establish a Government of National Union, which will truly represent all the people of all nationalities throughout Laos. The procedures and the timing for the elections will be agreed upon between the two sides.

Before these elections are held, and not later than 30 days after the signing of this agreement, the two sides will establish a Provisional Government of National Union and a Joint National Political Council, to carry out the agreements which have been signed and to administer the affairs of the nation.

Article 7

The new Provisional Government of National Union will consist of representatives of the Vientiane government side and of the Patriotic Forces side in equal number, and two qualified persons who are for peace, independence, neutrality and democracy, as agreed upon by the two sides. The future Prime Minister will not be included in the equal apportionment of the two sides. The Provisional Government of National Union will be set up under a special procedure with the agreement of the King; it will work according to the principle of unanimity between the two sides. It will have the duty of carrying out the agreements signed and the political programs which the two sides have agreed to, for instance, the carrying out of the ceasefire, the preservation of a durable peace, to implement in full the democratic rights of the people, to practice a peaceful, independent and neutral foreign policy, to coordinate plans for economic development, cultural expansion, and to receive and distribute combined foreign assistance from various countries aiding Laos.

Article 8

The Joint National Political Council [NPCC] is an organization of national reconciliation, consisting of an equal number of representatives of the Vientiane government side and the Patriotic Forces side, as well as other qualified persons who support peace, independence, neutrality and democracy in a number to be agreed on by both sides, working in accordance with the principle of unanimity in consultations between both sides and having the following duties:

> Consult and furnish opinions to the Provisional Government of National Union on major questions of domestic and foreign affairs of the nation.
>
> Support and assist the Provisional Government of National Union and the two sides in implementing the agreement, in order to successfully achieve national reconciliation.
>
> Examine and agree together with the Provisional Government of National Union on laws and regulations relating to general elections and to cooperate with the Provisional Government of National Union in setting up the elections to elect a National Assembly and to set up a regular national government.

The procedure for establishing the Joint National Political Council is as follows: both sides will discuss the subject in detail and come to a decision which they will forward to the Provisional Government of National Union to be submitted to the King for the final appointment. The same procedure will be followed to effect the dissolution of the Council.

Article 9

The two sides agree to neutralize Luang Prabang and Vientiane and to seek every method to guarantee the security of the Provisional Government of National Union and the Joint National Political Council and their effective functioning and to protect them from sabotage or pressure from any force within or without.

Article 10

A. While awaiting the election of the National Assembly and the establishment of the Permanent Government of National Union, in accordance with the spirit of Article 6 of Part II of the joint communique issued at Zurich June 22, 1961, both sides will preserve their own zones of temporary control and will attempt to carry out the political programs of the Provisional Government of National Union which the two sides have agreed upon.

B. Both sides will promote normal relations between the two zones, setting up favorable conditions for the people to travel, earn a living, visit one another, carry out economic, cultural and other exchanges and other activities in order to develop national concord and build national unity quickly.

C. Both sides take cognizance of the announcement of the American government that it will participate in healing the wounds of the war and in the reconstruction of Indochina after the war. The Government of National Union will discuss with the American government such participation in regard to Laos.

PART 4

CONCERNING THE JOINT COMMISSION TO IMPLEMENT THE AGREEMENT AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SUPERVISION AND CONTROL

Article 11

The implementation of this agreement is primarily the responsibility of the two sides concerned in Laos. The two sides will immediately set up a commission to implement the agreement with an equal number of representatives from each side. The commission to implement the agreement will begin to function immediately after the ceasefire is effective. The commission to implement the agreement will function according to the principle of unanimity in consultation.

Article 12

The International Commission for Supervision and Control, which was set up according to the 1962 Geneva Agreements on Laos, consisting of representatives of India, Poland and Canada, with India being the Chairman, will continue its activity in accordance with the duties, powers, and working principles stipulated in the Protocol of the above-mentioned agreements.

PART 5

OTHER DISPOSITIONS

Article 13

The Vientiane government side and the Patriotic Forces side promise to carry out this agreement and to pursue negotiations to bring to reality all the provisions that they have agreed to and to solve the remaining problems involving the two sides in a spirit of equality and mutual respect in order to put an end to the war, restore and preserve a durable peace, carry out reconciliation, build national unity and lead the nation to become peaceful, independent, neutral, democratic, unified and prosperous.

Article 14

The present agreement is effective as of the date of signing. Done at Vientiane, February 21, 1973, in five copies in Lao:

One copy for H.M. the King

One copy for each side

One copy for the archives of the Provisional Government of National Union

One copy for the archives of the Joint National Political Council

Representative of the Vientiane Government	Representative of the Party of the Patriotic Forces
Phagna Pheng PHONGSAVAN, Special Plenipotentiary Representative of the Vientiane Government	Phagna Phoumi VONGVICHIT, Special Plenipotentiary Representative of the Patriotic Forces

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Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation Between the Lao People's Republic and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, July 18, 1977

The Lao People's Democratic Republic and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam,

Fully aware that the Laos–Vietnam special relationship, the unshakeable militant solidarity and friendship between the people of Laos and Vietnam and the great comradeship between the Lao People's Revolutionary Party and the Communist Party of Vietnam, forged over decades of common struggle waged in sharing joys and sorrows to win victory together over the aggressors, and of cooperation and mutual assistance for the purpose of national construction, constitute a precious tradition, an invincible force of the two parties, a vivid reality and a law of development of the Laos and Vietnamese revolutions.

Considering that to strengthen the indefectible solidarity and long-term cooperation in all fields between Laos and Vietnam responds to the cherished aspiration and vital interests of the people of each country in the defence of national independence and socialist construction and conforms to the interests of real national independence, democracy, peace, and neutrality of the other peoples in Southeast Asia, to the interests of the world's peoples struggling against imperialism and colonialism old and new, for peace, national independence, democracy and social progress.

Reaffirming their loyalty to Marxism–Leninism and their will to continue to uphold the banner of national independence and socialism, closely combine genuine patriotism with proletarian internationalism and do their best to defend and develop the Laos–Vietnam special relationship so that the two countries, already bound together in their national liberation struggle, will be forever bound in their national construction and national defence.

Sharing the view that the independent and sovereign line and the correct leadership of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party and the Communist Party of Vietnam, the tradition of close solidarity between the two nations, the complete victories of the two countries in their struggle against the imperialist aggressors and their goal of achieving socialism are the bases for developing the Laos–Vietnam special relationship, in the spirit of the Laos–Vietnam joint statement of February 11, 1976.

With a view to strengthening the solidarity, long-term cooperation and mutual assistance in the cause of national construction and national defence, for the independence and prosperity of each country, thus contributing to defending and strengthening peace in Southeast Asia and the rest of the world.

Have decided to sign this treaty and have agreed on the following:

Article 1

The two sides undertake to do their best to defend and develop the Laos–Vietnam special relationship, to constantly strengthen solidarity and mutual trust, long-term cooperation and mutual assistance in all fields in a spirit of proletarian internationalism and on the principles of complete equality, respect for each other's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as each other's legitimate interests, and of non-interference in each other's internal affairs.

Each side will do its best to carry out its educational work so that all party members and the entire people of its country always treasure, preserve and foster the Laos–Vietnam special relationship and make it evergreen and everlasting.

Article 2

Proceeding from the principle that the defence of national independence and the maintenance of national security are the work of the people of each country, the two sides pledge themselves to wholeheartedly support and assist each other and carry out a close cooperation aimed at reinforcing the defence capacity, preserving independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and defending the people's peaceful labour, against all schemes and acts of sabotage by imperialism and foreign reactionary forces.

Article 3

In order to create mutual advantages, assist each other to overcome difficulties, to make the most efficacious use of the material potentialities of each country to build it into a prosperous country and to build a plentiful and happy life, the two sides will strengthen their relations of socialist cooperation of mutual benefit in agriculture, forestry, industry, communications and transport, the exploitation of natural resources and other economic fields; wholeheartedly assist each other economically and technically; help each other to train cadres; exchange economic, cultural, scientific and technical specialists; and broaden the trade relations according to a regime of special privileges.

The two sides will widen scientific and technical exchanges and cooperation in the domains of culture, arts education, public health, information, press, radio-broadcasting, cinematography, physical culture and sports and other cultural fields.

The two sides will multiply contacts between the branches concerned of the two countries to discuss the realization of the programmes of cooperation and exchange experiences in building economy and developing culture.

Article 4

The two sides affirm their determination to see to it that the Laos–Vietnam borders will be frontiers of lasting brotherly friendship between the two countries on the basis of the treaty on delimitating the national borders signed on July 18, 1977 between the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

Article 5

The two sides strictly respect and fully support each other's independent international policies.

The two sides endeavor to strengthen the militant solidarity and the relations of cooperation with the fraternal socialist countries; together with the socialist countries and the international communist movement, positively contribute to strengthening solidarity and mutual support and assistance on the basis of Marxism–Leninism and proletarian internationalism; unceasingly strengthen the militant solidarity and long-term cooperation and mutual assistance with fraternal Cambodia on the principle of complete equality, respect of each other's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity and legitimate interests, and of noninterference in each other's internal affairs; support the struggle of the peoples in Southeast Asia for real national independence, democracy, peace and neutrality, and establish and develop relations of friendship and cooperation with the other countries in this region on the basis of mutual respect of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, nonaggression and noninterference in each other's internal affairs, equality, mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence; support the struggle of the peoples in Asia, Africa and Latin America against imperialism and colonialism, old and new, and racism, for national independence, democracy and social progress; support the struggle of the working class and other work people in capitalist countries for the right to wellbeing, democracy and social progress; they undertake to do their utmost to contribute to the common struggle of the world's peoples for peace, national independence, democracy and socialism.

Article 6

The two sides will have regular exchanges of views on the questions concerning the relations between the two countries and international problems of common interest through contacts between the party and state leaders and visits of official delegations and special representatives or through the diplomatic channel.

The two sides will encourage the widening of the relations between mass organizations of the two countries. All questions concerning the relations between the two countries will be settled by negotiations in a spirit of mutual understanding and respect and in a fair and reasonable manner.

Article 7

The present treaty will be ratified and will come into effect at the date of the exchange of the ratification documents which will take place at the earliest time in Hanoi, capital of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

This treaty is valid for 25 years and will be tacitly prolonged every 10 years, if neither side notifies the other by writ about its intention to annul it, at least 1 year before its expiration.

Done in Vientiane, capital of the Lao People's Democratic Republic on the 18th of July, 1977, in two copies in the Vietnamese and Lao languages, both the Vietnamese and Lao copies being equally valid.

For the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Kaysone Phomvihan, Prime Minister	For the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Pham Van Dong, Prime Minister

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Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation Between the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, November 3, 1978

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics,

Proceeding from the close cooperation in all fields in a fraternal spirit, from the unshakable friendship and solidarity between the two countries on the basis of the principles of Marxism–Leninism and socialist internationalism, Firmly convinced that the endeavor to consolidate the solidarity and friendship between the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is in conformity with the basic interests of the two peoples and in the interests of the consolidation of the fraternal friendship and one-mindedness among the countries in the socialist community,

In keeping with the principles and objectives of the socialist foreign policy and the desire to ensure the most favourable international conditions for the building of socialism and communism,

Confirming that the signatories to the treaty acknowledge their international obligation to assist each other in the consolidation and preservation of the socialist achievements recorded by the two people through their heroic efforts and selfless labour,

Determined to work for the unity of all forces struggling for peace, national independence, democracy and social progress,

Expressing their iron-like determination to contribute to the consolidation of peace in Asia and throughout the world, and to the development of good relations and mutually beneficial cooperation among countries with different social systems,

Hoping to further develop and perfect the all-round cooperation between the two countries,

Attaching importance to the continued development and consolidation of the juridical basis of the bilateral relations,

In keeping with the objectives and principles of the United Nations Charter,

Have resolved to sign this Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation and have agreed as follows:

Article 1

In keeping with the principles of socialist internationalism, the two parties signatory to the present treaty shall continue to consolidate the unshakable friendship and solidarity and assist each other in a fraternal spirit. The two parties shall unceasingly develop political relations and cooperation in all fields and endeavour to assist each other on the basis of respect for each other's national independence and sovereignty, equality and non-interference in each other's international affairs.

Article 2

The two parties signatory to the present treaty shall join efforts to consolidate and broaden the mutually beneficial cooperation in the economic and scientific-technological fields in order to push forward the building of socialism and communism and to constantly raise the material and cultural standards of the two peoples. The two parties shall continue to coordinate their long-term national economic plans, agree upon long-term measures aimed at developing the most important sectors of the economy, science and technology and exchange knowledge and experience accumulated in the building of socialism and communism.

Article 3

The two parties signatory to the treaty shall promote cooperation between their state bodies and mass organizations, and develop broad relations in the fields of science and culture, education, literature and art, press, broadcasting and television, health service, environmental protection, tourism, sports and physical training and others. The two parties shall encourage the development of contacts between the working people of the two countries.

Article 4

The two parties signatory to the treaty consistently strive to further consolidate their fraternal relations, and to strengthen the solidarity and one-mindedness among the socialist countries on the basis of Marxism–Leninism and socialist internationalism.

The two parties shall do their utmost to consolidate the world socialist system and actively contribute to the development and defence of the socialist gains.

Article 5

The two parties signatory to the treaty shall continue doing their utmost to contribute to defending world peace and the security of all nations; they shall actively oppose all schemes and manouvres of imperialism and reactionary forces, support the just struggle for the complete eradication of all forms and colours of colonialism and racism, support the struggle waged by non-aligned countries and the peoples of Asian, African and Latin American countries against imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism; for the consolidation of independence and the defence of sovereignty, for mastery over their natural resources and for the establishment of a new world economic relationship with no inequality, oppression and exploitation, and support the aspirations of the Southeast Asian peoples for peace, independence and cooperation among countries in this region.

The two parties shall strive to develop the relations between countries with different social systems on the basis of the principles of peaceful coexistence, for the purpose of broadening and consolidating the process of easing tension in international relations and radically eliminating aggressions and wars of aggression from the life of all nations, for the sake of peace, national independence, democracy and socialism.

Article 6

The two parties signatory to the treaty shall exchange views on all important international questions relating to the interests of the two countries.

In case either party is attacked or threatened with attack, the two parties signatory to the treaty shall immediately consult each other with a view to eliminating that threat, and shall take appropriate and effective measures to safeguard peace and the security of the two countries.

Article 7

The present treaty does not concern the two parties rights and obligations stemming from the bilateral or multilateral agreements to which they are signatories and is not intended to oppose any third country.

Article 8

The present treaty shall be ratified and shall enter into force on the date of the exchange of instruments of ratification, which shall take place in Hanoi as early as possible.

Article 9

The present treaty shall remain in force for 25 years and thereafter shall be automatically extended for periods of ten years if neither signatory party declares its desire to terminate the present treaty by informing the other twelve months before the treaty expires.

Done in duplicate in the Vietnamese and Russian languages, both texts being equally authentic, in Moscow, this third day of November 1978

For the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam:	For the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
Le Duan Pham Van Dong (Signed)	L. I. Brezhnev A. N. Kosygin (Signed)

Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Co-operation Between the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the People's Republic of Kampuchea, February 18, 1979

Proceeding from the traditions of Vietnam–Kampuchea militant solidarity and fraternal friendship, which have overcome many trials and become an unbreakable force ensuring the success of each country's national defence and construction;

Deeply conscious that the independence, freedom, peace and security of the two countries are closely interrelated and that the two sides are duty-bound to help each other whole-heartedly and with all their might to defend and consolidate the great revolutionary gains they have recorded through almost 30 years' struggle full of hardships and sacrifices;

Affirming that the militant solidarity and the long-term and all-round co-operation and friendship between Vietnam and Kampuchea meet the vital interests of the two peoples and, at the same time, are a factor ensuring a durable peace and stability in Southeast Asia, and are, in keeping with the basic interests of the peoples in this region and contribute to the maintenance of world peace;

Confident that the Kampuchean people's complete victory under the glorious banner of the National United Front for the Salvation of Kampuchea, the correct line for independence, sovereignty and international solidarity of each country, and respect for each other's legitimate interests constitute a firm basis for the constant development of friendship and co-operation between the two countries;

Desirous to strengthen the military solidarity, the long-term co-operation and friendship and mutual assistance in all fields to consolidate independence, build a prosperous country and a happy life for each people, thus contributing to the maintenance of peace and stability in Southeast Asia and the world, in keeping with the objectives of the nonaligned countries' movement and the United Nations Charter;

Have decided to sign this treaty and have agreed upon the following articles:

Article 1

The two sides undertake to do all they can to defend and constantly develop the traditional military solidarity, friendship and fraternal co-operation between Vietnam and Kampuchea, and mutual trust and assistance in all fields on the basis of respect for each other's independence, sovereignty and legitimate interests, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit.

The two sides shall do all they can to educate the cadres, fighters and people of their respective countries to preserve the traditional Vietnam-Kampuchea militant solidarity and loyal friendship and make them pure and clear forever.

Article 2

On the principle that national defence and construction are the cause of each people, the two sides undertake to whole-heartedly support and assist each other in all domains and in all necessary forms in order to strengthen the capacity to defend the independence, sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity and peaceful labour of the people in each country against all schemes and acts of sabotage by the imperialist and international reactionary forces. The two sides will take effective measures to implement this commitment whenever one of them requires.

Article 3

In order to help each other build a prosperous and powerful country and a happy life free from cold and hunger, the two sides shall strengthen mutually beneficial fraternal exchanges and co-operation and assist each other in the fields of economy, culture, education, public health, science and technology, and in training cadres and exchanging specialists and experience in all fields of national construction.

To attain this objective, the two sides will sign necessary agreements and, at the same time, increase contacts and cooperation between the state offices concerned and between mass organizations of both countries.

Article 4

The two sides undertake to solve through peaceful negotiation all the differences which may arise in the relations between the two countries. The two sides will enter into negotiations to sign a treaty on the delineation of the national frontier between the two countries on the basis of the present border line with the determination to turn the present border into a border of lasting peace and friendship between the two countries.

Article 5

The two sides fully respect each other's independent and sovereign line.

They persistently pursue a foreign policy of independence, peace, friendship, co-operation and non-alignment, on the principle of non-interference in whatever forms in other countries' internal affairs, non-acceptance of any interference in their respective countries' internal affairs, and not allowing any country to use their respective countries' territory to interfere in other countries.

The two sides attach great importance to the long-standing tradition of militant solidarity and fraternal friendship between the Kampuchean, Lao and Vietnamese peoples, and pledge to do their best to strengthen this traditional relationship on the basis of respect for each country's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. They will strengthen their relations in all fields with the socialist countries. Being countries in Southeast Asia, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the People's Republic of Kampuchea persistently pursue a policy of friendship and good neighbourliness with Thailand and the other countries in Southeast Asia, and actively contribute to peace, stability and prosperity of the Southeast Asian region. The two sides will develop the relations of co-operation with the independent nationalist countries, the national liberation movements and democratic movements, and resolutely support the struggle of nations for peace, national independence, democracy and social progress. They will make positive contributions to the solidarity and growth of the non-aligned movement against imperialism and the other international reactionary forces, to regain and defend national independence and to advance towards the establishment of a new world economic order.

Article 6

The two sides will frequently exchange views on the questions concerning the relations between their two countries and other international matters of mutual interest. All problems in the relations between their two countries will be solved through negotiation in the spirit of mutual understanding and respect and with fairness and reason.

Article 7

This treaty is not aimed at opposing any third country and is not related to the right and obligation of each party to abide by the bilateral and multilateral agreements it engages in.

Article 8

This treaty shall take effect right from the day of the exchange of the ratification letters; the ratification shall be done according to the procedures of each party.

Article 9

This treaty is valid for 25 years and will be automatically prolonged every ten years if neither of the two signatory parties informs the other by writ one year before the expiration of the treaty about its intention to cancel the treaty. This treaty is done in Phnom Penh, capital of the People's Republic of Kampuchea, on the 18th of February 1979, in the Vietnamese and Khmer languages, which are equally valid.

For the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Pham Van Dong, Premier of the Government	For the People's Revolutionary Council of the People's Republic of Kampuchea, Heng Samrin, President of the People's Revolutionary Council

Economic, Cultural, Scientific and Technological Cooperation Agreement Between the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the People's Republic of Kampuchea, March 22, 1979

[Text] To develop the relations and strengthen the militant solidarity and fraternal friendship between Laos and Kampuchea, in response to the two countries' aspirations for all-round cooperation and mutual assistance for the cause of building their countries and making them prosperous, the

LPDR and the People's Republic of Kampuchea have mutually agreed on the following:

Article 1

The two sides shall do their best to develop economic, scientific and technological cooperation in conformity with each country's aspirations and legal procedures, based on the principles of respect for independence, sovereignty, equality, mutual benefit and unreserved mutual assistance.

Article 2

The aforementioned cooperation shall cover all spheres–industry, agriculture, forestry, fishery, trade, communications, postal, information, culture, education, fine arts, radio broadcasting, television, motion pictures, sports, public health, science, technology and other areas.

Article 3

The two sides shall jointly exchange delegations for study tours, visits, and research; exchange experts, lessons and documents; cooperate in research and in training technical cadres and workers; increase meetings and cooperation among the various branches of the state organizations concerned, among mass or organizations and among localities between the two countries.

Article 4

The two sides shall jointly permit and facilitate cooperation in the aforementioned spheres.

Article 5

Based on this agreement, all state organizations concerned of the two countries shall jointly agree on the details in protocols determining the contents and form of cooperation for each branch.

Article 6

A. This agreement shall come into effect at the date of the signing. It shall be valid for 5 years and will be automatically prolonged every 3 years if neither of the signatories notifies the other by writing of its intention to annul the agreement within 6 months before its expiration.

B. This agreement may be changed and expanded if the two sides so jointly agree.

This agreement is concluded in Phnom Penh on 22 March 1979 in two copies in the Lao and Khmer languages, both copies being equally valid.

For the LPDR, Sanan Soutthichak; For the People's Republic of Kampuchea, Mok Sakun

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